Khazaria in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries

Boris Zhivkov

EAST CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE IN THE MIDDLE AGES, 450-1450

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By

Boris Zhivkov

Translated by

Daria Manova

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Preface

The history of the steppe peoples or, more precisely, that of the state organization in the steppes is often presented as a string of political entities or ethnic communities that replace one another in rapid succession. The deeper and more thorough understanding of the processes there is hindered by one major obstacle—the lack of enough information and indigenous written records. In this respect, the Khazar Khaganate (from the seventh to tenth century) is no exception, quite the opposite. We have at our disposal only two letters, which can be defined as authentic Khazar documents: that of the Khazar ruler Joseph and that of a Khazar Jew (the so-called *Schechter Letter* or the *Cambridge Document*), addressed to Hasdai ibn Shaprut (the mid-tenth century). These letters are not sufficient for creating a satisfactory picture of the Khazar state. Written during the last period of the khaganate's existence, they have been subject to diverse and contradictory interpretations by modern scholars. At the same time, the Khazar state was of great significance for the development of Eastern Europe between the eighth and tenth centuries. This region was the meeting and interaction point for various traditions (state-forming and cultural). This can be seen most clearly in the religious life (pagans, Christians, Muslims and Jews often lived side by side in Khazaria). But apart from this (and because of it) Khazaria was a place of interaction for the cultural and civilizational influences, coming mainly from the South (from Byzantium and the Arab Caliphate) and from the East (from various steppe communities and states from Central and Middle Asia).

The Judaization of the Khazar elite was among the reasons behind this special interest in the Khazar state, but it was also a cause for the existence of politically charged studies. Such is the attempt to seek the origins of Eastern European Jews (and thus of a large part of the population of contemporary Israel) among the ethnic Khazars.[1] The history of the Khazar state is also closely linked to the issues surrounding the emergence of Kievan Rus'. With regard to its importance and to the opposition that it spurred among scientific trends in Russian historiography, the Khazar question is comparable perhaps only to the Norman one. The legacy of the Russian Slavophiles is supplemented by Soviet anti-Semitism, which reflects directly on the studies of Khazaria.[2] The popular concept of the Khazar Khaganate nowadays is built largely on this

1 See for instance Koestler 1976.

2 See for instance Shnirelman 2005 and 2007.

basis. It refers not only to the myth of the "thirteenth tribe" (in the words of A. Koestler), but also to the "vengeance on the foolish Khazars".[3]

The "Khazar myth", as it is known today, serves all kinds of political agendas that explain the Jewish presence in Europe and in contemporary Israel. If A. Koestler's thesis (which has no scientific grounds) is to be followed, it could be argued that in its larger part Israel's population consists of descendants of the Khazars, and therefore has no grounds for claiming its current territory. This topic is expanded by one of the scientific schools of thought in Russia, which sees the Khazars only as Jews and thus justifies the destruction of the khaganate by the Rus' as liberation of the peoples oppressed by Khazar rule.[4] This is why most of the notions about Khazaria today constitute a layered over time political tradition. In Russian science it is linked to the theory of the eternal struggle between the steppe peoples and the Rus'.

The study of the genesis of the ideas, represented by the "Khazar myth", along with its various nuances and trends, is a separate large topic that goes beyond the scope of this research. The "Khazar myth" has, of course, influenced (to a larger or smaller extent) the scientific theories of various authors (e.g. B. Rybakov) and has served as a basis for applying pressure on others (e.g. M. Artamonov). This has been shown in the respective places of this book. L. Gumilev's works also depict the "Khazar myth". Since his theories are discussed in detail in the present work, let me just point out here that the Khazar Khaganate represents a stage in the development of the Russian scientist's political theory, associated with the idea of the "zigzag of history" and the continuity between the so-called anti-systems, one of which he assumes the Jewish religion itself to be, along with the community that professed it.

The present study combines some extremely contradictory and purely scientific theories, created in the last few decades. The contradictions in the various authors' conclusions are determined not only by the vague accounts in the sources, but also by their use of different theories regarding the Khazar statehood and economy. The applied theory often proves crucial to the conclusions reached, despite the fact that the available information on Khazaria allows for other interpretations as well. The various scientific views therefore need to be handled carefully and subjected to additional analysis. The contradictions in the scientific views become especially acute regarding the last century of Khazaria's history. Despite the existence of several significant and

3 The phrase is a quote from the poem "Pesn' o Veshchem Olege" by A.S. Pushkin. See Petrukhin 2006a. See for instance also the discussion on the pages of *Voprosy literatury* from 1988 (Kozhinov 1988; Robinson and Sazonova 1988).

4 See also Kizlov and Mikhailova 2004; Tortika 2006a, 347–352.

authoritative summarizing monographs on the Khazars,[5] there is no full clarity in science regarding the ideology, the power structure and the ethnic and economical processes in the khaganate during the tenth century. These issues are closely related to the clarification of the reasons for the Khazar Khaganate's demise in the second half of the tenth century. The proposed solutions in science each have their own grounds and can lead to the impression, that there are several Khazarias, each one different from the rest.

Throughout all three centuries of its existence, the Khazar Khaganate consolidated many peoples and tribes of different origins and cultures. They occupied various areas of the East European Plain (the steppe, forest-steppe and forest zones), as well as parts of its periphery (the Crimean Peninsula and the Caucasus). The characteristics of the geographical environment determined the economic and cultural development of the various tribal communities, as well as the conditions, under which their relations were formed. In many places, different ethnic groups were intermixed, but there were also separate ethnic territories. It is not entirely clear how and to what extent the Khazar rule was imposed even in the lands, which were undoubtedly subject to the khaganate until the mid-tenth century. The same applies for the interaction and ties (cultural and economic) between the various ethnic groups and regions of Khazaria.

The last period in the history of the Khazar state (from the late ninth to the mid-tenth century) is regarded by a number of historians as a time of decline and weakening of the khaganate's power, which led to its demise after the Kievan Prince Sviatoslav's campaigns (in 965). In accordance with their preferences and attitudes, scientists highlight different reasons that determined the decline of the Khazar state. These include invasions, and in particular the Pecheneg one from the late ninth century; also changes in the development of international trade; the Judaization of the Khazar elite, which separated it from the rest of the khaganate's population; Khazaria's economic system, often described as nomadic, which hindered economic development and the integration of the various ethnic communities. Wars and rivalry with neighboring large states (Kievan Rus', Byzantium and the Arab Caliphate) also influenced the development of the Khazar Khaganate. The result of this rivalry was the spread of Christianity and Islam among the khaganate's population. The Khazar elite, however, adopted Judaism as their official religion after the beginning of the ninth century. On the other hand, the majority of the khaganate's population retained its pagan beliefs. The combination of Jewish and pagan

5 Dunlop 1967 (originally 1954); Artamonov 1962; Golden 1980; Novosel'tsev 1990; see also the works of L. Gumilev and S. Pletneva.

beliefs is also manifested in Khazaria's state ideology. But the degree of integration between the various religious systems as well as the ideological basis of Khazar power still remains unclear.

In recent years, the development of theories on the causes for the decline of Khazaria has been mainly determined by the results of archaeological research, since written sources do not provide enough information and thus give rise to multiple conflicting hypotheses in historiography. This study is therefore focused not on Khazar historiography in general, but on its development in recent decades. Nowadays, archeological data has become the basic and constantly renewable source material that gradually replaces the paramount importance of written records. Many of the viewpoints accepted by historians are already obsolete, and the image of the khaganate in the tenth century can be shown from another perspective—one that does not indicate decline, but development and even growth. In addition, common traits can be found in areas, which are considerably distant from each other, regardless of their ethnic or religious characteristics.

The goal of this study is to give a new perspective on Khazaria during the second half of the ninth and the tenth centuries by re-examining all the different, often well established views on this topic. The lack of sufficient written sources requires the use of additional material on steppe statehood in that period, as well as some deviations that are not always directly related to the Khazar issues. The topics selected in the book are consistent with the basic scientific theories, explaining the reasons for the decline of Khazaria after the mid-ninth century.

The literature on Khazaria is immense and it is impossible to examine all the existing scientific viewpoints here.[6] Therefore, various scientific trends have been differentiated, along with their main representatives. Their theories have all been traced and analyzed in the five chapters of this book. Generally speaking, a kind of "division line" can be seen in modern historiography between the preference for information acquired from written records and that obtained from archaeological data. The knowledge about large areas of the Khazar Khaganate comes solely from archaeological excavations. In fact, the material and written records (mainly from Arabic and Persian-language authors dating from the ninth and tenth centuries) complement one another. It is noteworthy that in Soviet historiography and in the Russian and Ukrainian historiographies that have succeeded it, the predominant place in the research on Khazaria is

6 On the historiography of Khazaria, see, for example, Artamonov 1962, 7–39; Novosel'tsev 1990, 3–66. Lastly, see Golden 2007a; on the monuments of the Saltovo-Maiaki archaeological culture specifically, see Tortika 2006a, 14–31.

occupied by archaeologists. This is why the first Russian monograph on the Khazar Khaganate, although being based on written records, was written by an archaeologist, M. Artamonov.[7] In the decades that followed, several more significant and influential archaeological monographs were published—that of S. Pletneva, M. Magomedov, V. Mikheev, I. Baranov, V. Flerov, V. Flerova, G. Afanas'ev, A. Tortika, among others.[8] L. Gumilev's monograph on Khazaria is also based on his own archaeological research.[9] Notable exceptions in this list are the works of the orientalists B. Zakhoder and A. Novosel'tsev.[10] A number of articles by V. Petrukhin should also be mentioned here, even though this historian does not have a specific monograph on Khazaria.[11]

Western historiography is dominated by studies, in which the analysis is conducted almost entirely on the basis of written records. This is especially true for the first monograph on the Khazar Khaganate written by D. Dunlop and the book by P. Golden, completed a few decades later.[12] The same goes for the monograph of O. Pritsak and N. Golb, which is also a study of a written record.[13] An exception are the works of T. Noonan, which are based mostly on data from numismatics and archaeological research,[14] including his remarkable study of the Khazar economy, where the material data has been analyzed along with written records.[15]

As was already mentioned, the same scientific facts are often used as the basis for diverse and mutually exclusive theories. The ever-growing archaeological evidence contributes to the increasingly diverse and multifaceted analysis of the Khazar history and culture. Many interesting ideas and conclusions have been expressed in a number of articles published in recent decades. It is quite impossible to name them all here. A few scientists should however be named, including V. Aksenov, N. Foniakova, J. Howard-Johnston, T. Kalinina, R. Kovalev, V. Koloda, K. Krasil'nikov, V. Maiko, D. Shapira, Ts. Stepanov, C. Zuckerman.

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7 Artamonov 1962.

8 Pletneva 1967, 1976, 1989, 1996, and 1999; Magomedov 1983 and 1994; Mikheev 1985; Baranov 1990; Flerov 1993 and 1996b; Flerova 1997 and 2001a; Afanas'ev 1993; Tortika 2006a.

9 Gumilev 2003.

10 Zakhoder 1962; Novosel'tsev 1990.

11 See for instance Petrukhin 1995b, 2000b, 2001 and 2005.

12 Dunlop 1967; Golden 1980.

13 Golb and Pritsak 1997.

14 See for instance Noonan 1980, 294–311; Noonan 1987, 243–258; Noonan 2001, 76–102; Noonan 2007, 207–244. See also the articles of R. Kovalev.

15 Noonan 1995–1997, 253–318.

Special attention has also been paid to various theoretical models concerning the steppe statehood and nomadic economy,[16] which often serve as a basis for explaining the processes in Khazaria. This has implied the need to seek examples for comparison in a much wider geographical range of the steppe zone and its surrounding areas, as well as to indicate, to the extent possible, the ideological proximity between them.

In order to resolve a number of issues regarding Khazar history, comparisons from Danube Bulgaria have been sought intentionally and purposefully. There are several reasons for this. One of them is, of course, the undeniable proximity between the two countries, conditioned by their common roots that are related to the steppe tradition. The Bulgarian material therefore often complements or clarifies the Khazar one. It should also be noted that ever since the establishment of the Khazar Khaganate the Bulgarian population constituted if not the largest, quite a considerable in size community/ties, whose settlements and monuments can be found throughout the whole territory of the khaganate, from Dagestan and the Volga to the Crimea, the Don and the Severski Donets. Despite P. Golden's opinion that many aspects of the Khazar problem are insolvable without the Bulgars,[17] in most of the works on Khazaria the information from Danube Bulgaria is either very poorly represented or completely missing. The aim of the present work is to draw attention to both monuments and written records from the Bulgarian Middle Ages, as well as to information drawn from Bulgarian folklore. Although some data from the Bulgarian ethnographic material (collected mainly during the nineteenth century), presumably pertaining to Bulgarian paganism, still needs to be additionally researched, the proposed examples are directly related to the Khazar problems and thus cannot be ignored.

One of goals of the book is to shed light on the problematic issues in Khazaria's history in the ninth and tenth centuries. This period is linked to previous centuries in the history of both the Khazars and the Eurasian Steppe tribes and states. Specific events and accounts from preceding time periods have therefore been analyzed, when necessary, as they help in clarifying the nature of the Khazar society in the ninth and tenth centuries, but also show its genetic continuity with steppe communities of the past. Wherever possible and to the extent possible, an attempt has been made to reject the already

16 See for instance Barfield 2001a and 2001b; Di Cosmo 1994; Khazanov 1994; Kliashtornyi and Sultanov 2000; Kradin 2001a, 21–32 and 2001b; Kradin and Skrynnikova 2006; Pletneva 1982.

17 Golden 1980, 42.

well-established theories and to support other (less popular) ones, so as to give a new perspective on the solution of some existing issues. The study would be a success and have real meaning, if it thus helps overcome various conflicting views and in doing so gives a new basis for future studies of the history of the Khazar Khaganate.

Russian/Bulgarian/Ukrainian Transliteration

Vernacular	Romanization	Vernacular	Romanization
Upper case letters		Lower case letters	
А	A	а	a
Б	B	б	b
В	V	в	v
Г	G (Rus., Bulg.) / H (Ukr.)	г	g (Rus., Bulg.) / h (Ukr.)
Ґ	G	ґ	g
Д	D	д	d
Е	E	е	e
Ё	E	ё	e
Ж	Zh	ж	zh
З	Z	з	z
И	I (Rus., Bulg.) / Y (Ukr.)	и	i (Rus., Bulg.) / y (Ukr.)
Й	I	й	i
І	I	і	i
Ї	ї	ї	ї
К	K	к	k
Л	L	л	l
М	M	м	m
Н	N	н	n
О	O	о	o
П	P	п	p
Р	R	р	r
С	S	с	s
Т	T	т	t
У	U	у	u
Ф	F	ф	f
Х	Kh	х	kh
Ц	Ts	ц	ts
Ч	Ch	ч	ch
Ш	Sh	ш	sh
Щ	Shch (Rus., Ukr.) / Sht (Bulg.)	щ	shch (Rus., Ukr.) / sht (Bulg.)
Ъ (Bulg.)	U	ъ	u
Ы	Y	ы	y
Ь	' (soft sign)	ь	' (soft sign)

Vernacular	Romanization	Vernacular	Romanization
Upper case letters		Lower case letters	
Э	E	э	e
Ю	Iu	ю	iu
Я	Ia	я	ia

Introduction

When the Khazar ruler Joseph wrote his response to Hasdai ibn Shaprut, a dignitary of the Caliph of Córdoba Abd Al-Rahman (912–961), in the mid-tenth century, he could have hardly imagined the approaching end of the Khazar Khaganate, and probably to his own rule too. The king of Togarmah (the khagan-bek?),[1] Joseph, described Khazaria as a flourishing state, whose rulers governed over numerous peoples and tribes, a state that was capable of stopping the Rus' and the other enemies of the Arab Caliphate from devastating all of its lands.[2] Joseph's description of the Khazar Khaganate from the mid-tenth century is not accepted by most historians. At the same time, Joseph's letter in its unabridged and abridged edition, together with the *Cambridge Document*, are the only authentic Khazar written sources that exist today. This requires greater caution in accepting or denying the authenticity of the information they contain.

We should ask ourselves: why does the Khazar ruler's view of his own country differ so much from those of most modern scientists? Did he want to depict Khazaria as a powerful nation—and a kind of a defender of the Caliphate at that—on purpose, in order to seek help from the Muslim countries[3] (although it is unclear how the Córdoba Umayyads could have helped Khazaria), or are the described territorial possessions an expression of his claims?[4] And what if, ultimately, the solution to the posed questions does not lie in Joseph's letter, but in the modern view of Khazaria and the basis on which it is established? This leads to the issue of the reasons why the Khazar Khaganate gradually lost its influence and power. P. Golden, although having a relatively coherent theory similar to that of D. Dunlop (for them both, see below), notes: "In Eastern Europe, the two most important events (the rise of the Rus' and the decline of Khazaria) are still not fully elucidated".[5]

1 The subject of the ideology of the Khazar elite, a part of which is related to the idea of authority over the descendants of the son of Japheth, Togarmah, is discussed elsewhere (see chapter 1.2) It is important to stress here that the use of this title (King of Togarmah) is not accidental in that it expresses a certain authority over the majority of the peoples, considered his descendants.

2 Kokovtsov 1932.

3 Pletneva 1976, 12.

4 Artamonov 1962, 386–387.

5 Golden 1980, 263.

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According to M. Artamonov, "in the middle of the tenth century, Khazaria continued to be a significant state, although its previous power was severely shaken".[6] He tries to oppose the opinion of B. Rybakov, who, of course, cannot quite agree with Joseph's view and the idea that Khazaria had ever held such power and influence.[7] M. Artamonov's view is therefore somewhat ambiguous. One thing he states clearly is that in the seventh to ninth centuries, "the Khazar Khaganate was actually a huge empire, occupying almost the entire southern half of Eastern Europe (this sentence is revolutionary for Soviet science at the time—*Author's note*). By the time of King Joseph, the size of this country was greatly reduced".[8] The historian lists the territories and peoples, which according to him were no longer under Khazar rule in the tenth century, and concludes that "the Khazar king still regarded himself as a ruler of a vast territory, over which his ancestors' authority extended, although only a small part of it remained subjugated to Joseph himself".[9] Thus, M. Artamonov contradicts his own above-cited statement, according to which Khazaria was still a significant state in the tenth century. The Russian scholar's view on the reasons that led to the decline of the khaganate also seems contradictory. On the one hand, he argues that peace with the Arab Caliphate was essential for Khazaria in order to develop trade, which enriched the government. But on the other, the Samanid state, the leading Muslim political force in Middle Asia during the tenth century and a conductor of the spread of Islam among the steppe peoples, is depicted as hostile and dangerous for Khazaria. The growth of its influence, along with the Volga Bulgars' conversion to Islam, was a threat to the Khazar state, whose reaction should have been the creation of an anti-Islamic coalition among the steppe nomads. At the same time, however, it is precisely the peace with the Caliphate, which the Samanids were also subject to, even if only nominally, as well as the enrichment through trade that are indicated as reasons for the divergence of interests between the population, subject to the khagan, and the Khazar nobility. This divergence also led to the gradual secession of many tribes and peoples from the Khazar Khaganate.[10]

According to S. Pletneva, Khazaria's weakening and subsequent demise was caused by the Khazar khagan's conversion to Judaism. This created an irrevers-

6 Artamonov 1962, 385.

7 On the scientific issues regarding the Khazars in the 1950s, after the publishing of the article in Pravda Newspaper in 1951, and the Soviet scientists' stance on this topic, see chapter 4.5.

8 Artamonov 1962, 386.

9 Artamonov 1962, 386–387.

10 Artamonov 1962, 414.

ible division between the Judaized Khazar nobility and the vast majority of the khaganate's highly diverse population, kept in subjection only by the army that was employed by the ruling strata. Khazaria's defeat in the wars and the devastating consequences of the Pecheneg invasion (between the late ninth and the early tenth centuries) that caused the depopulation of the majority of the khaganate's agricultural areas, as well as a gradual dying out of the Saltovo archaeological culture (the culture of the Khazar state) are all seen the result of this division (which also led to a civil war).[11] S. Pletneva confirms the observation of M. Artamonov, arguing that "by the middle of the tenth century, the Khazar Khaganate was a noteworthy political entity only in the mind of the khagan. In his letter, Joseph was describing the former borders and past greatness of his state".[12]

As can be expected, L. Gumilev's opinion stands apart from the rest. Already in 1966 he draws attention to the climate changes in the tenth century, which, according to him, had a big impact on Khazaria. Following changes in the pathway of the Atlantic cyclones, the steppe zone of Eurasia began to dry out due to lack of rainfall. The economy of the nomads thus started to wane, along with their power. The climate triggered migratory movements from east to west towards the more fertile steppes of the Northern Black Sea region, and the first of these was the Pecheneg one. They were so weakened that they could not cause significant damage along their way. On the other hand, since they moved in numerous small units and could not be stopped, they blocked Khazaria, becoming masters of the steppe. The rainfall shifted northwards, to the forest zone, raising the water levels of the rivers and especially the Volga. As a result, the Caspian Sea level began to rise, flooding the main agricultural lands of the Khazars and thus weakening their economy.[13]

According to L. Gumilev, the Khazar khagan's conversion to Judaism was also crucial for the division of the Khazar society, which went through a long and exhausting civil war. The interests of the Khazar population and those of the ruling nobility were so conflicting that it was impossible for them to unite

11 Pletneva 1976, 63–65. It should be borne in mind that in her later works S. Pletneva does not speak so strongly of the Pecheneg invasion consequences. The devastation of the Saltovo monuments is presented as a long process and not a one-time consequence of the Pechenegs' arrival in the Northern Black Sea region. This will be discussed in further detail below, during the analysis of the Pechenegs' place in Eastern Europe during the tenth century (see chapter 2).

12 Pletneva 1976, 68.

13 Gumilev 2003, 114.

against the threat hanging over Khazaria that came from Kievan Rus'[14] (as opposed to a similar statement by M. Artamonov, in which the main danger came from the East and the Muslims). Later, L. Gumilev's point of view undergoes some changes. He deepens his focus on the division of the Khazar state in accordance with his theory on the evolution of human societies. According to him, the Khazar society represented a chimera. This term refers to the division of the Khazars into Judaized ones, who were the leading class, and the rest (mostly pagans or children of Jews and Khazar women), which were underprivileged. The two groups could not have shared common interests.[15] After the civil war, which the Jews won thanks to the Pechenegs they hired for money, "the nature of Khazaria changed. From an orderly entity it unraveled into an unnatural combination of an amorphous mass of subjects and a ruling class, which was, in blood and religion, foreign to its people".[16] The ruling class (the Jews) supported itself from transit trade. Thus, the climate changes that had a devastating impact on the Khazar population, not only did not have a negative effect on the Khazar state (which by now was embodied by the Jews), but became the cause for the biggest expansion of the khaganate's influence precisely during the first half of the tenth century (also consistent with the conquest of Kievan Rus').[17]

A. Novosel'tsev's opinion is similar to that of M. Artamonov and S. Pletneva, both in terms of the assertion that the Khazar ruler Joseph was describing the boundaries of an earlier Khazaria, and regarding the issue of the division in Khazar society. In support of the theory regarding the Khazar state's weakness during the tenth century, he pays greater attention to the account of the Byzantine emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus.[18]

V. Petrukhin also believes that Joseph exaggerated the Khazar influence in the tenth century, but allows for the existence of some Khazar predominance in the Northern Black Sea region in the mid-tenth century. The historian does not take literally the statement in the *Cambridge Document* that Kievan Rus' fell under the domination of the Khazars, but instead assumes that "the failures of the campaigns in the 940s probably gave the Khazars a reason to believe that Rus' was still under their authority".[19] V. Petrukhin opposes the argument that the Khazar khagan's conversion to Judaism caused the alienation of the

14 Gumilev 2003, 126–127.

15 Gumilev 1997, 156–157.

16 Gumilev 1997, 167.

17 Gumilev 1997, 210–212 and 225–226.

18 Novosel'tsev 1990, 7, 153, and 211–219.

19 Petrukhin 1995a, 102.

scantily-numbered Khazar nobility from the people. "The idea that Judaism destroyed the khaganate is equivalent to the assertion that Orthodoxy doomed Constantinople, and thus is beneath any criticism".[20]

According to I. Baranov, Joseph's description is historically accurate, at least regarding the territory of the Crimean Peninsula. The scientist assumes that Khazaria's influence in the Crimea was greatest in the mid-tenth century.[21] He associates the end of the Khazar domination over the peninsula with the destruction of the Saltovo culture. This way, I. Baranov also opposes the view that the Pecheneg invasion was the main reason for the devastation of the Saltovo settlements. According to him, "the demise of the Saltovo settlements was objectively predetermined by the overall development of the relations between the Rus', the Khazars and Byzantium that were manifested in the form of a struggle for hegemony over the coastal areas of the Sea of Azov and the Northern Black Sea region: the Bulgars, who were the mainstay of the Khazar Khaganate in Taurica, stood in the way of both the Rus' and the Byzantine interests".[22] In general, it should be noted that modern archaeological scholars who study Medieval Crimea tend to agree with Joseph's account. In addition, the words of V. Maiko can be cited: "it is precisely during the 940s and 950s that the territory of Khazaria reached its maximum size. All this makes the account of King Joseph regarding the large territory of his land quite plausible".[23]

According to D. Dunlop, it "would be hazardous to say" that the lack of a national or religious unity was the cause for Khazaria's demise.[24] The divide in the Khazar Khaganate was a consequence of the structure of this state, which he sees as a combination of incorporated territories, held in subjection by military force. Their diminishing could have caused the disintegration of the state, since the army supported itself by taxes collected from these territories. The fall of Khazaria was the result of the loss of military control, as well as the lack of more durable ties among the population of the khaganate, which could have led to its unification.[25]

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20 Petrukhin, Interview.

21 Baranov 1990, 54.

22 Baranov 1990, 152–153. A. Tortika has a similar opinion regarding the Saltovo monuments in the Don region (Tortika 2006a, 182, 245–246, 492, 497, and 510).

23 Maiko 1997, 114. Quite a few scientists (mostly from Russia and Ukraine) reject the idea that a large part of the peninsula belonged to the Khazar Khaganate not only during the tenth century, but also in the ninth or eighth centuries (see for instance Naumenko 2004b; Novosel'tsev 1990, 109–110 and 133; Romashov 2002–2003, 143 and 2004, 256; Gertsen 2002; Makarova 2003. Also, see Aibabin 2003).

24 Dunlop 1967, 224.

25 Dunlop 1967, 233–235.

P. Golden expresses a similar view. The tribes and clans of a nomadic state, which he considers Khazaria to be, would always be a centrifugal force. This led to a "continuing struggle between the khagan and his clan, on the one hand, and the subject clans which did not willingly submit to the authority of the khagan, on the other".[26] This situation forced the Khazar rulers to hire an army in order to maintain the military force which kept the state's economy going. Fully agreeing with D. Dunlop's opinion on the interdependence between the military force and the treasury's income, P. Golden accepts that "Khazaria fell not because of the judaicization of the Khazars (the extent of which is by no means clear) but because of the inherent weakness of the structure of the nomadic state with its centrifugal forces and the nature of the economy which evolved on the shores of the Volga".[27]

Going back to P. Golden, T. Noonan sees the Khazar Khaganate's economy as the main reason for its stability. It was diverse and well-balanced, which allowed the Khazar state to survive for three centuries—a rarity for a "steppe empire". The economic division in Khazaria helped to avoid the disadvantages of the nomadic economy. Along with this, the various tribal communities in the khaganate gradually began to integrate.[28] According to T. Noonan, "the end of Khazaria can be attributed to both military and economic factors. The appearance of the Rus' and Pechenegs in the ninth century slowly eroded the Khazars' vast tributary empire and thus weakened its economic viability. Unable to defeat its enemies, Khazaria was destroyed by them".[29] Another significant reason for Khazaria's decline in T. Noonan's opinion is the shift of the main trade routes that connected Eastern Europe with Middle Asia, which bypassed the Khazar lands in the tenth century, thus contributing, for example, to the rise of Volga Bulgaria as an alternative center to the Khazar Khaganate.[30]

The presented views show an almost complete lack of consensus in their representation of the Khazar Khaganate in the tenth century. Also, they very rarely tend to be more than hypotheses. The opportunities for their review are few and mostly depend on the results of archaeological excavations. Their publication is, however, a slow process and their use as evidence for the overall development of Khazaria is a difficult task, associated with processing

26 Golden 1980, 111.

27 Golden 1980, 111; a more detailed critique of the opinions of M. Artamonov and S. Pletneva on the Judaization as a cause for Khazaria's demise can be found in Golden 2005, 43–45.

28 Noonan 1995–1997, 293–296.

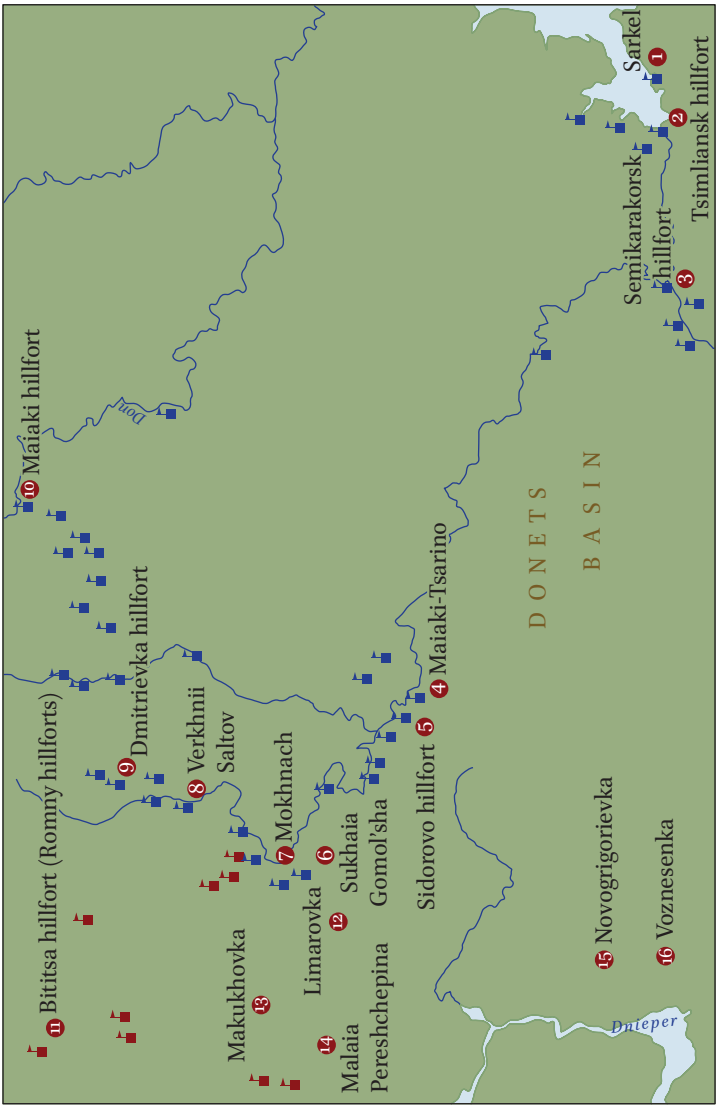
29 Noonan 1999, 503.

30 Noonan 1992, 250–251.

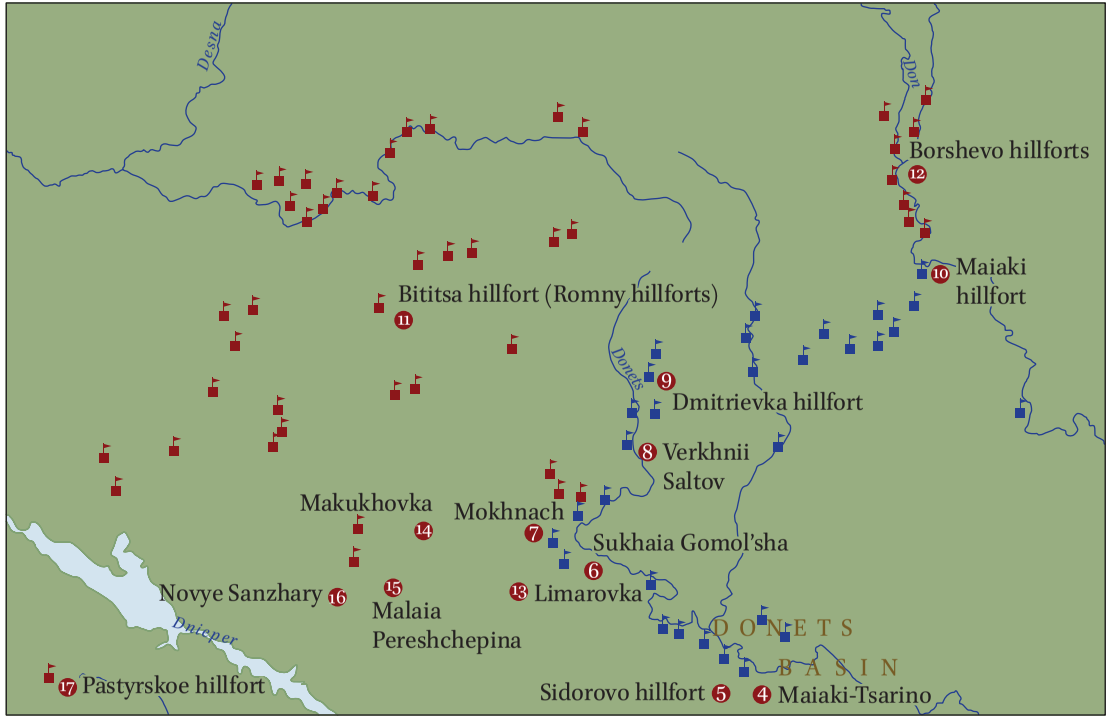
massive amounts of data, a very small percentage of which has been published adequately. Still, certain results in this regard can be seen, for instance, in the research of S. Pletneva, I. Baranov, V. Petrukhin and T. Noonan. Overall, however, science is dominated by theories, built mostly on the basis of written records. In this regard, attention should also be drawn to another issue, related to the overlaying of various hypotheses. As a result, a theory, which in itself is hard to prove, begins to be used as an indisputable fact. A new theory is built on its basis, which in turn also begins to be seen as something already established, although it could not possibly exist without the previous theory it has been built on. "In the end, the same thing happened as in quite a few other instances throughout the history of science: by frequent repetition, the unsupported assumptions began to be perceived as indisputable truths".[31]

31 Khazanov 1975, 124.

Maps



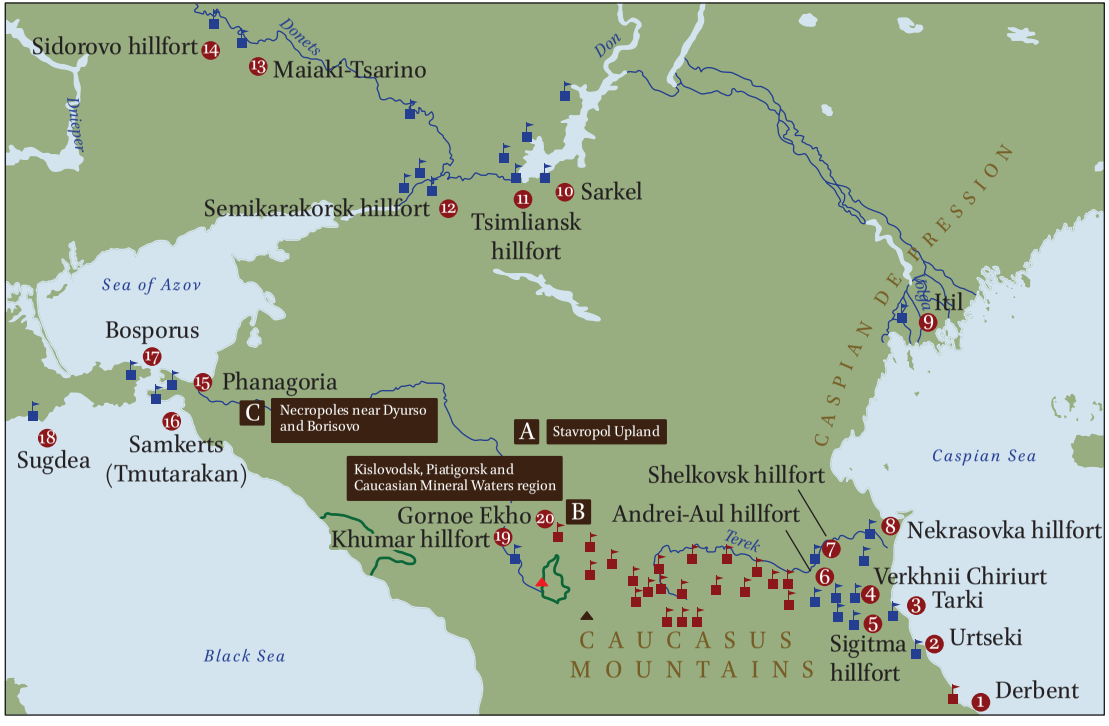
MAP 1 *Saltovian hillforts in the Don Region.*



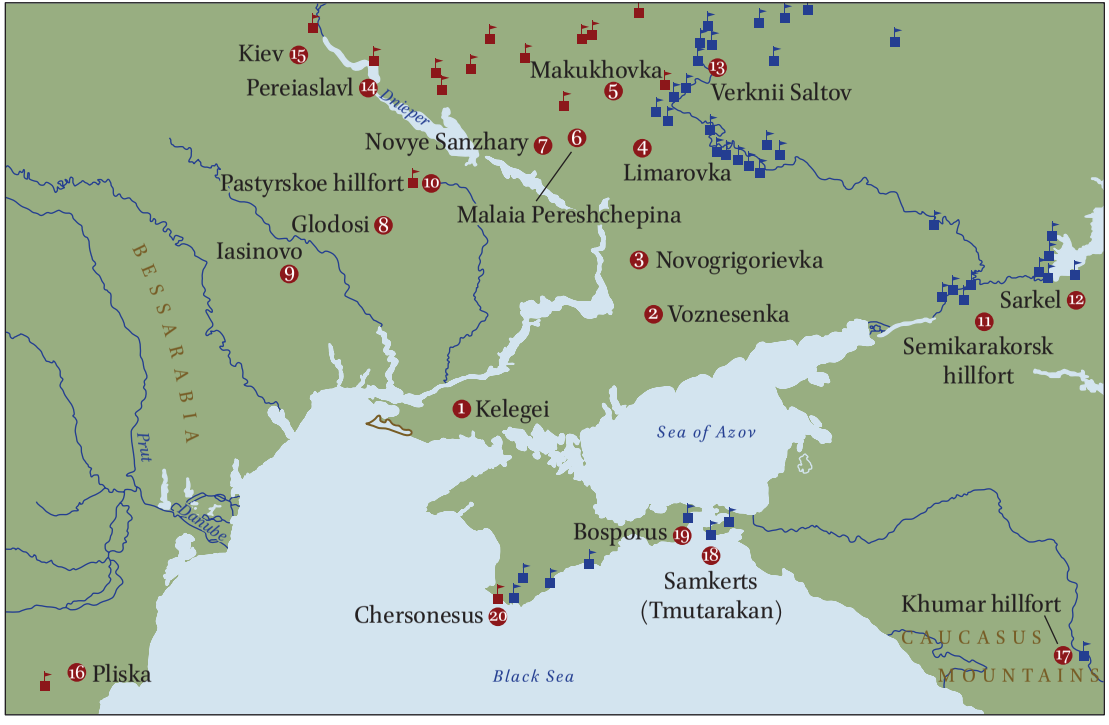
MAP 2 *Saltovian and Slavic hillforts.*

MAP 3 *Khazarian fortresses* (*Crimea, Taman Peninsula and the Lower Don Valley*).

MAP 4 *Khazarian fortresses in Crimea.*



MAP 5 *Alanian and Khazarian fortresses in the North Caucasus.*



MAP 6 *1–9—sites of the Malaia Pereshchepina type.*

MAP 7 *Hillforts and fortresses in East Europe (Khazaria, Volga Bulgaria and Kievan Rus').*

MAP 8 *Fortresses, hillforts and towns in Middle Asia.*

MAP 9 *Fortresses, hillforts and towns in East Europe and Middle Asia.*

CHAPTER 1

The Ideology of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries: The Difficult Reconciliation of Steppe Traditions with Judaic Monotheism

In the tenth century, the religion practiced by the Khazar ruling dynasty and possibly by quite a significant part of the nobility was Judaism. At the same time, the majority of the population, subject to the khagan, continued to adhere to its pagan beliefs. Both the written records and the results from archaeological research indicate the presence of quite a few Muslims and Christians. Usually, the Khazar elite's conversion to Judaism is interpreted in light of the practice, widespread in the contemporary to Khazaria "barbarian" lands, whose nobility imposed Christianity or Islam on its subjects. This practice is viewed as a deliberate attempt to unify into an ethnic whole the often multilingual and multiethnic population that professed different cults. The adoption of a common religion is thus considered one of the important conditions for the formation of a nation, and for the blurring of tribal and ethnic differences. According to this point of view, since the Khazar elite failed to spread Judaism among the majority of the population, Khazaria could not become a unified cultural and ethnic whole.[1] This fact contributed to the dissolution and, ultimately, led to the collapse of the khaganate in the middle of the tenth century. Along with this, the religious tolerance in Khazaria is also emphasized, although it was coercive, or in other words a conscious political act in the name of preserving the integrity of the state.[2]

The main problem regarding the presentation of the Khazar Khaganate's ideology is how exactly the khagan's authority among the khaganate's pagan, Christian and Muslim population was sustained. Here, the offered solution is generally only one—by coercion, with military force.[3] However, military force does not explain, for example, why a numerous Bulgar population remained under the rule of the Khazar khagan, since it can be assumed that it had the

1 Artamonov 1962, 262–264, 329, and 334; Pletneva 1976, 61–62; Novosel'tsev 1990, 153–154; Golden 2003, no. 3, 151; Stepanov 2005a, 68.

2 See for instance Artamonov 1962, 266, 334, and 412; Stepanov 2005a, 77, 122, and 124.

3 Dunlop 1967, 233–235; Golden 1980, 111. L. Gumilev is one of the most ardent supporters of the idea that the Judaized Khazar nobility maintained its power by force and coercion (Gumilev 2003, 126 and 1997, 168–176).

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opportunity to resist, especially with a strong Bulgarian state nearby. The question, therefore, is whether the Khazar population's notion of authority and of the ruler himself continued to be related to pagan beliefs and practices despite the latter's professed Judaism. Or, seen from another angle—whether and to what extent the Khazar nobility followed the Judaic views on authority. Also, to what extent the pagan notions were preserved, since they could explain the influence of the khagan among a multiethnic population that professed different religions and cults.

An argument in favor of the assertion that even after the Judaization of the khagan and his closest entourage the general notions of power continued to adhere to pagan beliefs is the prevalent issue of the Khazar dual kingship. Ts. Stepanov assumes that "the justification of the sacral sovereignty of the khagan after this period (861 AD—*Author's note*) includes many preserved Central and Middle Asian elements (in which it is logical to look for Irano-Turkic, or more precisely, Turanian roots), while the emphasis in the justification for the power of the reigning king-bek is perhaps leaning more towards Old Testament models and archetypes. Moreover, the king/priest pair is well-known in Ancient Israel as well and its appearance in Khazaria precisely in this aspect is not surprising, especially in light of Judaism being the "state" religion of the khaganate [...] The Irano-Turkic roots of *Pax Nomadica*, preserved in the person of the khagan also in the tenth century (cf. "the sacral regicide", of which there are accounts in the Arabic written tradition) show the difficult balance between tradition and innovation and the preservation of some patriarchal notions and elements in the power and its justification in Khazaria, in spite of the fact that in the ninth century Judaism was finally imposed as a "state" religion".[4] According to M. Artamonov and T. Noonan, the authority of the khagan ensured the regime's legitimacy.[5] It is difficult to understand how the pagan and Judaic notions of power (which were closely related to both the Christian and Muslim ones) interacted and "reconciled" with each other. Nevertheless, even if numerous religions were professed in Khazaria, this does not mean that there was no unity of the religious (or more likely, the mythological) ideas among the population.

According to S. Pletneva, "a unifying factor for the entire population was the consensus of religious concepts".[6] It is hardly a coincidence that the nomads (the steppe peoples) themselves were the spreaders of ideas, concepts and

4 Stepanov 2003a, 221–222.

5 Artamonov 1962, 411; Noonan 2001, 78.

6 Pletneva 1982, 104.

last but not least—of religions.[7] T. Zhumaganbetov notes the coexistence of Manichaeism, Nestorianism, Zoroastrianism, Confucianism and Buddhism among the Medieval Turko-Mongol ethnic groups, along with their ancient traditional cults. Each one of these religious systems "if not in principle contrary to the traditional worldview, can, under various circumstances, become stronger than the old gods". The flexibility of Tengrism consists in the ability of the Turks not to cast aside the new worlds, new relations and new religious systems they encountered, but on the contrary, to integrate and modify them organically. They very quickly became a part of Turkic culture".[8]

In his analysis of the Tibetan religion Bon, B. Kuznetsov examines the belief embodied in its ideological system and inherited by the Iranian tradition that leads to religious tolerance and according to which the major deities of the various peoples are the same, regardless of their names.[9] In view of the steppe tradition, which unifies ideas and myths of different origins and accepts the various religions as parts of a whole, it is possible to understand both the religious tolerance of Khazaria's population and the reason why it did not resist the khagan and his entourage's Judaism.[10] In S. Pletneva's opinion, "the religion of the pagan nomads is characterized by extreme syncretism. It unified many cults, which were otherwise incompatible with each other".[11]

A similar syncretism is also noted regarding the Bulgars. According to Iu. Stoianov, this syncretism "should be evaluated in itself and in light of the overwhelming influence of Iranian and Sassanid traditions in Bulgar art and architecture; furthermore, the Bulgar ethno-cultural symbiosis with the Pontic Sarmato-Alanian tribes whose beliefs definitely contained some Zoroastrian traits, traces of which remained even after the Bulgaro-Alanian migrations to the lands along the middle reaches of the Volga, should also be taken into account. The complex data collected from Bulgar religious monuments is still being examined, but it definitely speaks of tolerance and syncretism in the religion and arts of the pagan Bulgar state".[12] It is precisely because of this

7 Khazanov 2001, 1–3.

8 Zhumaganbetov 2006, 157.

9 Kuznetsov 1998, 191–192.

10 On this matter, see Bubenok 2004.

11 Pletneva 1967, 171.

12 Stoianov 2006b, 190. Iu. Stoianov also notes the similarity between the Bulgar pagan temples and the Iranian fire temples from the Parthian and Sassanid era. On Bulgarian shrines, see Stepanov 1999, 48 and 156–160; Ovcharov 1997, 50–58; Vaklinov 1977, 112–114; Chobanov 2006, 27–35; Chobanov 2008, 60–65; Boiadzhiev 2008, 310–338; Bidzhiev 1984, 121–122. On the influence of Manichaeism and Zoroastrianism among the Bulgar and Khazars, see also Stepanov 2002a, 7–8; Stepanov 2005a, 122; Poliak 2001, 99–100;

syncretism that it is still difficult to determine the nature of the Bulgar pagan religion and especially its ideology. As for Khazaria, according to S. Pletneva, "the religious concepts of the population of the Don Region between the eighth and the ninth centuries constitute a vast topic, since the fragmentation and brevity of the written and archaeological sources make it impossible to examine these notions separately from the religions of the other Irano-lingual and Turko-lingual nomads".[13]

The ruling family's change of religion is not uncommon for the steppe empires contemporary to Khazaria. A very similar example is the Khakasian state (the Kyrgyz Khaganate) where the nobility (or rather, a small part of it), together with the ruler, converted to Manichaeism (around 765 AD), while the majority of the population remained pagan.[14] In this case, the change of religion did not lead in the slightest to the disintegration of the ethnic whole, to civil wars or to the collapse of the state. Therefore, there is something eluding the study of the Khazar dual kingship issue. Most likely, it is contained in the Khazar population's notions of power. Khazaria's population here is seen as all the ethnic groups that defined the appearance of the material culture and which most likely had a direct participation in the establishment and functioning of the state—the Khazars, the Bulgars and the Alans. In other words, these three ethnic groups' notions of power should be the leading issue in the process of defining the nature of the Khazar Khaganate in the tenth century.

The above-said directly lays out the problem of the Turko-Iranian symbiosis that occurred in the steppes in the first millennium AD. Though here the Turko-Iranian symbiosis does not in the least imply the division of the Khazar population into Turks (which the Bulgars and Khazars are most often seen as) and Iranians (the Alans). Rather, it refers to a cultural fusion that was not accomplished through contacts between the various ethnic groups in one state, but that defined to a smaller or larger extent each one of them. The Bulgars, Khazars and Alans can be seen as a manifestation of this process. In other words, it refers to the origin of these three ethnic groups, which suggests a combination of Iranian and Turkic features, either during their formation

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Artamonov 1962, 286. See also Shapira 2007a, 293–294. Recently (in 2000) scientists found a Zoroastrian funeral complex near Derbent, which is dated between the sixth and the first half of the seventh centuries (Gadzhiev 2007). Maiko 1996, 131–132 suggests the existence (from the late seventh century) of a Zoroastrian temple near the Morskoe village in the Crimea, in a region populated by Bulgars.

13 Pletneva 1967, 171.

14 Kyzlasov 2004, 7; Pletneva 1982, 94. A similar, though not sufficiently clarified, situation existed also in the Uyghur Khaganate after 763 (see for instance Stepanov 2005a, 76).

(probably in Middle Asia) or as a consequence of their historical development and the contacts made during their migrations towards Europe. When considering the problem of a nation's origin, it is common to search for some hypothetical land of origin. But in truth, the land of origin of the Bulgars, Khazars and Alans will hardly ever be precisely located.

The situation is quite different when trying to specify the cultural community to which a given people belong. In this respect, the ideas associated with state government, mythology, traditions, artifacts of material culture and burial practices, though common among different peoples and different regions, are a reliable guide. Generally speaking, the Bulgars, Khazars and Alans are steppe people. During the period in question, the steppe people belonged to three large language groups: the Iranian, Turkic and Ugric one. Linguistic differences do not necessarily imply differences in the field of spiritual culture and in the political state model. That is why it is difficult, in the absence of sufficient and convincing evidence, to determine the linguistic affiliation of many of the tribes, mentioned in the sources, who inhabited Eastern Europe at the time after the Hunnic invasion (the fourth century). After the end of the fourth century AD, a gradual Turkicization of the steppe population began, with this process being far from over in the tenth century. Moreover, it should be borne in mind that "the countries in *Pax Nomadica* were a priori multiethnic and multilingual. In such unions, the language of the ruling family (tribe) is imposed naturally, and is periodically replaced by another during a change of those in power. The presence of such a supratribal language, such a *lingua franca*, for a certain period of time, however, does not signify a linguistic unification in this type of communities".[15] When it comes to the cultural community of the steppe peoples, it must be borne in mind that to them this community was "specific for every age, i.e. it varied in time, but very scarcely in space. All the numerous cultures that have been distinguished by archaeologists are local or local-temporal variations of the vast and complex nomadic (equestrian) cultural community in every age, covering the entire Eurasian Steppe. Characteristically, the demise of individual variations of this community does not change or violate its development as a whole".[16]

15 Stepanov 2000, 113; see also Stepanov 2003c, 17 and 27; on this topic, see also Pritsak 1981a, 12. According to Gumilev 1997, 64, it is not possible to find out what exactly was the language of the Bulgars and Khazars during the fifth and the sixth centuries. The prevalence of the Turkic language in the steppes took place in the eleventh century.

16 Pletneva 1982, 152.

1.1 The Turko-Iranian Symbiosis and the Cultural Identity of the Khazars, Bulgars and Alans

The next paragraphs will examine the Khazars, Bulgars and Alans as a part of a community that genetically and culturally brings us back to the steppe tribes from the second millennium BC. The ties between them can be traced through archaeological artifacts and are visible in their worldview, ideology and the various forms of state systems. Several centers can be distinguished, which influenced the development of the steppe ethnic groups for an extended period of time. It is also important to bear in mind that in the steppe and its adjacent territories, the difference in the ideology of nomads and sedentary peoples is often hardly perceptible. Therefore, the main objective here is not to seek the places of origin of the various ethnic groups or their differentiation, but the common traits they shared, which can also be defined as a cultural identity.

By the end of the second millennium BC, the steppe territories to the east, including Western Mongolia, were inhabited by Indo-European tribes. In this remote region, the Indo-Europeans lived near or alongside Mongoloids. For more than a millennium, they used common pastures and participated in the same state or tribal alliances. This interaction continued also in the empire of the Huns (third century BC—second century AD), on the vast territory of which tribes that differed in race and language migrated, intermixed and influenced each other.[17] Not surprisingly, although most scholars perceive the Huns as Turkic-speaking, the question of their linguistic identity cannot yet be determined with certainty.[18]

The Huns became the cause for the first major migrations (for which there is evidence in the sources) of Europoid tribes westward from the Western Mongolia region. During the second century BC, the Huns forced the Yuezhi people (who previously dominated the steppes of Western and Central Mongolia—the Hun Chanyu Modun was previously held hostage by them) to migrate westward to Middle Asia. According to historians, the Yuezhi are either Tocharians or Iranians. Regardless of the Yuezhi's ethnicity, the presence of Tocharians in the steppes indicates not only that an Indo-European population had reached so far east, but also a cultural influence, different from the Iranian one. In their migration westwards, the Yuezhi also dragged along some of the Iranian tribes of the Wusuns (between the second century BC and

17 Alekseev 1972, 230–244; Kliashtornyi and Sultanov 2000, 15 and 47–48; Stoianov 2003, 40–42; Stoianov 2004a, 9; Stoianov 2006a, 67–70 and 74; Golden 2006, 18.

18 Di Cosmo 2004, 163–166; Kliashtornyi and Sultanov 2000, 67; Stepanov 1999a, 21; see also Maenhcen-Helfen 1973, 376ff regarding the European Huns.

the fourth-fifth centuries AD the Wusuns inhabited the Tian Shan area and Zhetysu (the "Seven Rivers" area) and the Sakas (forced by the Wusuns to leave Zhetysu and to migrate towards the Syr Darya River).[19] These three large ethnic communities (named Ases, Sakaravakas and Tocharians in Western sources) became the reason for the downfall of Hellenic Bactria, where the Yuezhi would later establish the Kushan Empire (from the first century AD).[20]

The next major migration westward was the Hunnic one (in the second century AD). P. Golden associates the Hunnic migration with the end of the Iranian domination in Mongolia.[21] It is believed that on their way to the banks of the Volga, the Huns mixed with Ugric-speaking and Iranian-speaking (Saka-Sarmatian) tribes.[22] Until the establishment of the Turkic Khaganate (in the sixth century), various ethnic groups with different linguistic backgrounds continued to move around in the steppes, and this process did not merely involve migrations from east to west, but also in the opposite direction.

The complex ethnogenesis of the Turks themselves is probably also a result from such a migration. Based on legends about the origin of the people of Ashina, it is presumed that his tribe migrated towards the Altai Mountains from East Turkestan or the Turpan Oasis. On this territory, where "the sons of the she-wolf" remained for about a century and a half, the predominant population spoke Iranian and Tocharian languages. According to one of the legends, the sons of the she-wolf (ten in number) married local women and took their family names, one of which was Ashina. In 460, one of the descendants of the Ashina clan led his tribe towards the Altai Mountains. Not surprisingly, the name Ashina itself is most probably of Iranian origin.[23] Moreover, the two most senior titles after that of the khagan in the Turkic Khaganate were *shad*, which had Iranian roots (along with the title of the khagan's wife—*khatun*) and *yabghu*, of Tocharian origin.[24] It is presumed that the *khagan*, *khan*, *tegin*, *chor* and *tarkhan* titles, as well as the name Turk itself, are also of Iranian origin.[25] The *bek* title can be added here as well. Furthermore, the names of the

19 Kliashtornyi 1964, 109 and 171; Kliashtornyi and Sultanov 2000, 42, 48, and 51–57; Stoianov 2004a, 12–13 and 16–21.

20 Kliashtornyi and Sultanov 2000, 42–43; Stoianov 2004a, 21–22 and 28.

21 Golden 2006, 19.

22 Kliashtornyi and Sultanov 2000, 66–67; Novosel'tsev 1990, 69; Artamonov 1962, 42–43; Rashev 2001, 11.

23 Kliashtornyi 1964, 104–105 and 112; Kliashtornyi 1994, 445–447; Kliashtornyi and Sultanov 2000, 74; Petrukhin 1995a, 189; Golden 2006, 20.

24 Golden 1980, 190 and 208; Golden 2006, 21; Kliashtornyi 1964, 111, Stoianov 2004a, 26.

25 Stoianov 2004a, 44 and 2004b, 493. Shervashidze 1990, 83–90 identifies as Iranian titles such as *shad*, *yabghu* (Tocharian), *khatun*, as well as *elteber*, but suggests Chinese roots for

early Turkic khagans: Bumin, Istemi, Muqan, Taspar and Nevar, are not Turkic in origin either.[26] The strong Iranian influence among the Turks of Ashina enables V. Stoianov to pose the question: "what if the Turk(yut)s represented a type of Turkicized Iranians or what if they, being Turks in the present-day meaning of the word, absorbed Iranian elements as well?"[27] This also prompts P. Golden to consider as quite possible that "religious and attendant concepts of royal ideology came to the Turkic peoples [...] from Iranian or even earlier Indo-Iranian contacts".[28] Or, put another way, "the allegedly mixed Saka-Altaic or possibly Wusun-Altaic origin of the Turks is reflected in their lifestyle, religion, social structure, preserved terminology and even their appearance".[29]

In their study of the origin of the Bulgars, scholars usually emphasize the presence of Iranian, Turkic and Ugrian traits among them. Thus, D. Ovcharov accepts that "the most promising appears to be the view, according to which the Proto-Bulgarians have the closest proximity to the eastern branch of the Wusuns (Alans and Ases), which can be traced back to the earliest times in the regions of Central Asia. Even then, however, this community actively included also Turkic elements, and later on, it was significantly influenced by the culture of the Chinese, Indians and Eastern Iranians. Only thus can the diverse (and to some researchers—even unexpected) manifestations in Bulgar culture from later times be explained. Ultimately, the undeniable fact remains that the Proto-Bulgarians came to the Balkan Peninsula highly Turkicized, which can hardly be refuted".[30]

The definition "highly Turkicized" is without content. It should be borne in mind that "the alleged Turkicization processes in Early Medieval Bulgar culture cannot be illustrated with specific archaeological evidence and thus exist in historiography only in the form of an a priori assumption".[31] The theories on the origin of the Bulgars are mostly hypothetical. The mixing of Iranian and Turkic traits is not surprising, but does not in any way distinguish the Bulgars from the other steppe peoples. While it is possible that various toponyms and ethnic names (especially the highly popular Pu-Ku following the works

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the titles of *khagan*, *tegin* and *tudun*. The *tarkhan* title, according to him, is probably also of Chinese origin, but he does not rule out an Iranian etymology. The *boila*, *erkin*, *chor* and *baghatur* titles remain of unknown origin to him.

26 Golden 2006, 21.

27 Stoianov 2006a, 79.

28 Golden 2006, 18–19. According to Minaeva 1991, 24, a typological similarity between the Indo-Iranian and the Turkic mythical circle can also be traced.

29 Stoianov2004a, 43.

30 Ovcharov 2002, 7–8.

31 Vladimirov 2005, 42.

of B. Simeonov,[32] or the relation to Pamir and Balkh following the works of P. Dobrev)[33] actually refer to the ethnic group with the name Bulgars, they do not serve as an argument for the initial stage of the Bulgarian ethnogenesis, but rather just indicate the presence of Bulgars (in case they actually were Bulgars) in different parts of Eurasia.[34] Therefore, the place and role of the Bulgars in Asia prior to their resettlement to Europe remain unclear for scholars. This is why even V. Stoianov believes that "assigning the ancient Bulgars to the community of the Sakas, Wusuns or Tocharians without taking into account the ethnic interference processes in the former tribal unions is like simply replacing one unknown in the equation with another, and does not give a definitive solution to the problem of the Bulgarian genesis".[35]

In R. Rashev's opinion, the Bulgars "appear to be partial" to three ethnic groups—the Huns, the steppe Iranian-speaking tribes (Scythians, Sarmatians and Alans) and the Finno-Ugric tribes.[36] The acceptance of the Sarmatians as an important element of the Bulgarian ethnogenesis could largely explain the

32 See for instance Simeonov 1979 and 2008.

33 See for instance Dobrev 1994 and 1998a.

34 Probably the fullest research on this sort of data is made by Stepanov 1999a, 15–62.

35 Stoianov 2004b, 487. According to Stoianov 2006b, 184, during the Early Middle Ages, "the old North-Iranian and Finno-Ugric tribes in the steppes often became involved or entered into tribal unions and confederations with the nomadic Turkic-speaking newcomers and a lot of them went through a linguistic, as well as a partial or even more significant ethnic Turkicization [. . .] In addition to the linguistic and cultural homogenization, this was a process of cultural and religious syncretism, especially between Iranian and Turkic traditions, in which major gods could have both Iranian and Turkic names, and the nobility in the new nomadic federations included Iranian, Turkic and Ugrian elements, which co-existed and fought side by side".

36 Rashev 2001, 13. Rashev 2007a, 32 ties this theory to the migration of the Huns, which he sees as a cause for the possible "impurities" in the evolution of the Bulgarian ethnogenesis. "Thus, at the present moment, the question of the archaeological localization of the Bulgar land of origin remains open. Given the direction in which the Huns moved towards Europe and the regions through which the two Hunnic columns passed, the composition of the Proto-Bulgarians until their resettlement in the mid-seventh century could most likely have included three groups of people: 1. Iranian-speaking groups from the steppes of Middle Asia and Eastern Europe. 2. Ugrians from the forest-steppe region of Western Siberia. 3. Huns from Central and Middle Asia, whose ethnic appearance upon their arrival in Europe seems to have already been considerably mixed [. . .] The presence of the Eastern European Iranian-speaking Sarmatian and Alanian tribes was significant, if not predominant. They participated in the second phase of the Proto-Bulgarian ethnogenesis both through groups in the steppes that had preserved their nomadic lifestyle and through groups in the forest-steppe region that had shifted to a sedentary way of life".

Bulgar culture between the eighth and the tenth centuries. A significant part of the Bulgar monuments (both in Danube Bulgaria and in Khazaria and Volga Bulgaria) show direct parallels with the Late Sarmatian culture. And if the theories about a Turkic and Ugrian influence sound largely hypothetical, the Sarmatian connection is reflected directly in the material culture of the Bulgars (such as pottery and burial rites, i.e. also involving the spiritual culture).[37]

One of the proponents of the Ugrian influence theory is M. Artamonov. He assumes that the Huns mingled with Ugrian tribes in the Trans-Ural Region, which let to the Ugrian physical type predominating over the Mongolian one. For this reason, the Huns lost many of their own cultural traits and adopted "the local, Sarmatian (!) culture, spread among the Ugrians". The Turkic language was prevalent among the Ugrian tribes that intermingled with the Huns, but the Ugrian influence led to the emergence of the Bulgar and Khazar languages.[38] Thus, according to M. Artamonov, the Bulgars were Turkicized Ugrians who, "by mixing with the remnants of the local Eastern European population (i.e. the Sarmatians—*Author's note*), composed this people who [...] began calling themselves Bulgars".[39] The scholar believes that the Bulgars are a generalizing term for all the ethnic names mentioned in the sources regarding the Northern Black Sea region and the Caucasian steppes between the fifth and the seventh centuries. They were the result of ethnic mixing between incomers and local tribes, which led to the emergence of "the Hunno-Bulgar ethnic array, where the local Sarmatian traditions in some aspects occupied a dominant position, probably due to the fact that in the physical sense this array mostly consisted of descendants of local Europoid tribes, rather than of Mongoloid incomers"[40] and ultimately, ethnic groups like the Sabirs and Khazars were actually Bulgars.[41] The is no other evidence of the Ugrian influence, except the

37 This connection became clear after the discovery of the necropolis near Novi Pazar in Bulgaria. See Stanchev and Ivanov 1958.

38 Artamonov 1962, 42–43.

39 Artamonov 1962, 98.

40 Artamonov 1962, 102.

41 Artamonov 1962, 127–128. It is important to note that the Ugrian theory is missing from previous works of M. Artamonov, where the emphasis is instead made on the Sarmatian influence. In 1935 M. Artamonov wrote that "in addressing the issue of the ethnic composition of the Khazar state one must take into account the archaeological data that attests to a genetic link and cultural continuity between the Sarmatian and the Khazar age. In light of these facts, the traditional view on the replacement of one nationality with another and on the way Turkic tribes forced out the Irano-Sarmatian population that previously occupied these parts should be reviewed" (Artamonov 1935, 65). Twenty years later, the scientist's opinion is somewhat different: "The Turko-lingualism (of the

presence of Ugrians in the Cis-Ural Region before and during the Hunnic invasion of Europe, and the connection to the Bulgars and the Khazars as well is supported only by assumptions.

The Sarmatian influence on Bulgar culture brings up the question whether the Bulgarian ethnogenesis is not a result from the intermingling of local tribes and incomers after the Hunnic invasion. According to some scholars, the influence of the Alans (often depicted as the sole descendants of the Sarmatians after the fourth century), who lived alongside or together with the Bulgars for several centuries, is crucial. The Sarmatians are thus considered a homogenic European ethnic group (at least from the third century BC onwards) and the changes in their culture are thought to be the result of their internal development rather than caused by an influx of new tribes from Asia. In O. Bubenok's opinion, a part of the Sarmato-Alanian tribes continued to lead a nomadic lifestyle in the steppes of Southeast Europe even after the Hunnic invasion. The material culture of the steppe population during the Early Middle Ages speaks in favor of this.[42] O. Bubenok assumes that the steppe version of the Saltovo culture, characterized by the custom of burying the dead not in catacombs, but in pits, belonged to the Yases (Ases), which were mentioned in sources from the tenth to the thirteenth century. Since this version of the Saltovo culture is defined as Bulgar (of the "Turkic-speaking Bulgars"), O. Bubenok presumes an influx of Iranians (Sarmatians) in the Bulgar ethnic community. Quite unexpectedly, O. Bubenok then argues that Sarmatians and Bulgars inhabited the steppes near the Don and the Sea of Azov during the Early Middle Ages, though it is not quite clear how exactly they can be distinguished from each other. He bases his assertion on the pit burials, which were widespread before the Huns came to Eastern Europe. Moreover, since there were no analogues to the Saltovo culture monuments in Central Asia and the sources did not mention Bulgars in this region, the Bulgar ethnos must have been formed in Eastern

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inscriptions, which has not yet been established—*Author's note*. See Kyzlasov 2000) of the bearers of the Saltovo culture in its evident genetic ties with the culture of the Iranian-speaking Alanian population of the Eastern European steppes during the first centuries AD can most probably be explained by the fact that the Iranian-speaking tribes in these parts were partially absorbed by the Turks [...] The result of this mixing in the Eastern European steppes was the emergence of Turkic-speaking Bulgar tribes, a part of which were the Khazars [...] Sarmato-Alanian tribes, whose physical and cultural descendants to a certain extent were the bearers of the Saltovo culture" (Artamonov 1958, 47 and 64–65). It is not clear what caused this evolution in Artamonov's views, reflected most clearly in his summarizing work from 1962. It can be assumed that it was a result of the political interference in the studies on Khazaria in the early 1950s.

42 Bubenok 1997, 17–20.

Europe. After that, according to O. Bubenok, there were actually no Bulgars in the steppes of Eastern Europe and the whole population of the steppe version of the Saltovo culture was represented by Yases.

O. Bubenok reaches the conclusion that both the pit and the catacomb burials were left by Alans, and to complete the picture, the body-burning was apparently also Alanian.[43] Since this issue will be discussed in more detail elsewhere, let me just say here that there is absolutely no reason to view the Sarmatian culture as part of an ethnic whole. There is also no reason for this ethnic whole (which is non-existent) to bear the name of the Yases or Alans during the Early Middle Ages. The problem of the Sarmatian heritage in Medieval Europe is much more complex and cannot be bound to only one ethnic group such as the Alans. As to the Saltovo culture analogues, a vivid example for the Central Asia region is the culture of the Wusuns, though this does not in any way mean that one of these cultures derives from the other.[44] Incidentally, V. Gening notes a direct link between the Wusuns and the Bulgars.[45]

R. Rashev assumes that among the Bulgars the nobility (or part of it) was Turkic, while the majority of the population was of Iranian origin.[46] This old Iranic-speaking population, bearer of the Late Sarmatian archaeological culture, joined the tribal unions of the Ugrian and Turkic newcomers. "The new change of culture further erased the traces of the various ethnic groups. Thus, the problem of the primary land of origin of the Proto-Bulgarians acquires a new light. It may be significantly closer than previously thought".[47]

The Late Sarmatian culture is dated between the second and the fourth century. It is not a culture of a homogenic population that constitutes an ethnic whole. Its emergence can be directly linked to the influx of new tribes from different areas in Asia. It should also be borne in mind that around the second century AD, the Huns established themselves in the Volga Region. The first (and of course quite vague, as they come from later sources) accounts about Bulgars, Barsils and other related tribes date from that time. The formation of the Late Sarmatian culture brings up the question of its bearers' attitude

43 Bubenok 1997, 37–44, 64, and 171.

44 On the Wusuns, see Akishev and Kushaev 1963, 139ff.

45 Gening 1989, 8; see also Rashev 2007a, 29.

46 Rashev 2001, 10–11; see also Rashev 1993. A similar example are the Avars. According to archaeological evidence (burials), it is possible that their nobility was of Turkic origin (with very prominent Mongoloid traits), while the population was Sarmatian (Iranian) (Tot and Firshtein 1970, 29–33), but data on the Bulgar nobility's ethnic appearance is far less clear. Cf. for instance Beshevliev 1967.

47 Rashev 2001, 11–12.

towards the new wave of migrations that engulfed various parts of Asia and brought several different tribal communities to Asian Sarmatia. Part of this issue is the problem of the interaction between the newcomer population and the bearers of the Middle Sarmatian culture, often linked to the Alans, who were also migrants from Asia. Considered from this angle, the Sarmatian influence on the Bulgar culture does not support the theory of the local (European) influence on the Bulgarian ethnogenesis, since the Sarmatian culture is a product of constantly incoming from different parts of Asia tribes which were different in origin. In the period between the second century BC and the second century AD alone, three significant changes occurred in the ethnic composition of the East European steppe population.[48]

There are several theories on the origin of the Alans, including a Scythian, Aorsian, Massagetian, Altaian, Yuezhi-Tocharian and a Wusun one. It is assumed that the Alans came to the steppes of Eastern Europe in the first century AD, thus a direct connection is sought with the spread of the Middle Sarmatian culture, the emergence of which can be dated roughly to the beginning of the first millennium AD. At that point new elements emerged in the culture of the Volga-Don steppe population that had parallels in a vast area, stretching from Middle Asia to China in the east.[49] Precisely during the first century AD, tamgas appeared in Eastern Europe, identical to the ones that were spread earlier in Mongolia (third to first century BC) and later on in Middle Asia (second and first century BC). According to A. Skripkin, "a whole cultural layer" shifted from the east to the west under the pressure of the Huns. The Alans can be perceived as the bearers of this new cultural wave in the Eastern European steppes.[50]

According to B. Vainberg, the spread of the so-called Tsagaan Gol tamgas indicates the advance of an Iranian group of nomadic tribes from Mongolia through Kazakhstan and Middle Asia toward Eastern Europe at the end of the first millennium BC. Parts of them settled down in the oases of Middle Asia and gave Khwarezm, Bukhara and Samarkand their ruling dynasties.[51]

48 Skripkin 2001.

49 Skripkin 2001, 1982, 50–51, and 2005; Sergatskov 2005.

50 Skripkin 1996, 163–165; see also Khazanov 1971, 84. The presence and influx of people from Central and Middle Asia among the European Sarmatians is marked by the cultural monuments for the period between the fourth and the second centuries BC. (Fedorov and Fedorov 1978, 25–26).

51 Vainberg and Novgorodova 1976, 71–72; see also Kliashtornyi and Sultanov 2000, 56; Poluboiarinova 1980. According to Vainberg 1990, 277, these tamgas "convincingly demonstrate the Sarmatian (in the broad sense of the term) origin of the dynasties of Khwarezm, Bukhara and Samarkand". See also Georgiev 1997.

The Alans migrated towards Eastern Europe from Middle Asia. This is evidenced both by the material culture and by accounts in the Chinese sources. Thus, the *Hou Han Shu* (*The Book of the Later Han*, 25–220 AD) states that the Kingdom of Yancai changed its name to Alania and was a dependency of Kangju, the center of which was located on the middle reaches of the Syr Darya River. The precise location of Yancai is unknown, but presumably it was along the lower reaches of the river or generally in the Cis-Aral Steppe. The subjected to the Kangju Alans captured Yancai, after which the land changed its name to Alania, and during the first and second centuries AD Kangju's influence reached the lower reaches of the Volga and the Cis-Ural Steppe. The Alans' arrival in Europe is thus placed in direct relation to Kangju's period of highest influence.[52] According to T. Gabuev, the rise of Kangju was due to the influx of some of the Yuezhi during the first century BC, and they, like the Wusuns, were part of the tribal community of the Alans.[53]

While it can be argued that the Alans were bearers of the Middle Sarmatian culture, the same thing cannot be said regarding the Late Sarmatian culture. During the second century AD, the culture of the Sarmatians on the lower reaches of the Volga underwent significant changes. The burial rites became more homogenous and were dominated by a number of new and uncharacteristic for the previous period features such as the northern orientation of the burials, the artificial deformation of the skulls, the narrow burial pits and the pits with a niche, cut into one of the walls.[54] Without going into details, I would like to point out that these features are also found in later Bulgar necropoles.[55] The northern orientation of the burials is typical for the burial practices of the Huns and of part of the Yuezhi. It spread among the nomadic necropoles in

52 Gabuev 2000, 53–54; Skripkin 1996, 165; Iatsenko 2000, 103; Kliashtornyi 1964, 172–173 and 175; Tolstov 1948b, 146–147. According to B. Vainberg, the territory of the Alans and of Yancai was located neither in the Cis-Aral Region nor along the reaches of the Syr Darya, but between the Volga and the Ural Rivers. The center of Kangju was located not only on the middle reaches, but also on the lower reaches of the Syr Darya. (Vainberg 1990, 265, 274, 280–283, and 302–303).

53 Gabuev 2000, 54–60.

54 Skripkin 1982, 43–45; Krivosheev and Skripkin 2006, 124–127; Dimitrov 1987, 60–61; Tot and Firshtein 1970, 71.

55 See for instance Vladimirov 2005, 42; Dimitrov 1987, 64–65; Fedorov and Fedorov 1978, 29–30; Flerova 2002, 173. See also Iordanov 2008. An interesting detail is that during the Late Sarmatian period, there was a significant rise in burials with poor inventory and with mostly no weapons. Although Khazanov 1971, 85 interprets this as a sign of property division in the Sarmatian society, it is a characteristic trait of the later Bulgar necropoles.

Middle Asia after Bactria's defeat. This orientation is traditional for the population of the Trans-Urals, Western Siberia and Central Kazakhstan.[56] The artificial skull deformation is a common custom from ancient times, and is associated with the tribes of the Saka community in Middle Asia (the earliest examples date from the fifth to the third century BC, in the region of Ferghana, and from the sixth to the fifth century in Turkmenistan).[57] The Late Sarmatian population had a higher Mongoloid admixture and anthropologically resembled the South-Siberian race, as well as the race of Transoxiana (the Pamiro-Ferghana type).[58] The anthropological features of the Late Sarmatian population in the vicinity of the lower reaches of the Volga were similar to those of the Bulgars from the following centuries.[59] When comparing the Bulgars with the Alans, one should keep in mind that the two ethnic groups also differed in their anthropological traits.

Based on the aforementioned analogies, as well as the monuments of material culture, scholars presume a migration of a population from Central and Middle Asia. The necropoles in the Lower Volga area are particularly similar to those along the lower and higher reaches of the Amu Darya, in Ferghana and Bukhara and in the Bishkent valley in Tajikistan.[60] It is presumed that these migrations were caused by the Hunnic invasion and by the rise of the Kushan Empire, which is associated with the aforementioned dates of some of the necropoles of Northern Bactria (first to second century BC), which were similar as a type to the Late Sarmatian ones.[61]

Gradually, the Late Sarmatian culture spread westward and covered the territory of the Northern Black Sea region. The relations and interaction between the newcomers and the local tribes, and above all the Alans, are of special interest. Based on archaeological research it can be asserted that after the second century AD, the Alans were a mixture of local tribes and newcomers from the East. It is presumed that the center of their alliance at that time was the Don Region. In the area along the lower reaches of the Don, the traits of the Middle Sarmatian culture remained for a relatively long time and thus coexisted with the traits of the Late Sarmatian culture.

56 Skripkin 2001; Fedorov and Fedorov 1978, 27; Rashev 2007a, 31; Vainberg 1990, 190–191.

57 Tot and Firshtein 1970, 146–147; Iordanov 2008, 127–128; Trofimova 1968, 184–185; Skripkin 1982, 46; Stepanov 1999a, 47.

58 Tot and Firshtein 1970, 69ff.; see also Khodzhaiov 1987; Iablonskii 2000.

59 Stepanov 1999a, 46–47.

60 Skripkin 1982, 46–47; Dimitrov 1987, 61–64; Iordanov 2008, 23.

61 Skripkin 1982, 47; Dimitrov 1987, 64–65.

The influx of new ethnic groups of Iranian origin to the cities of the Northern Black Sea region is also evidenced by the appearance of new, previously unused names. In the mid-third century, Tanais was probably destroyed not by the Goths, but by a tribe, whose center was located in the Central Caucasus. An argument in favor of this is the spread of the catacomb ritual in the Volga-Don Interfluve, which indicates an influence or influx of a population of North Caucasian origin among the Alans, since this ritual is not typical for the Sarmatians.[62] This ritual in particular became typical for the Alans during the following centuries and distinguished them from the rest of the Sarmatian tribes.

Clearly, there is no reason to attribute all Late Sarmatian monuments to the Alans. While it is unclear what territory the Alanian union occupied, it is unlikely that its influence spread beyond the Volga to the east. A significant amount of the Late Sarmatian monuments from the third to the fourth century is located east of the lower reaches of the Volga, on the territory of contemporary Bashkiria and in the South Cis-Ural Region. In this territory, a severing of the ties to the region along the Black Sea and the North Caucasus occurred, as well as a strengthening of those to Middle Asia and to regions, located even further to the east. A. Skripkin assumes that this population was included in the union of the Huns.[63]

The results of the research on the origins of the Bulgars, Alans and the Khazars lead to one particular region in Middle Asia (the lower and middle reaches of the Syr Darya), which in one way or another, all three ethnic groups had something in common with. This is not some presumed land of origin, but a region that in the scope of several centuries has synthesized in its culture Iranian and Turkic traits. This refers primarily to the Dzhetyasar culture (along the lower reaches of the Syr Darya), but also to the closely related to it Otrar-Karatau culture (along the middle reaches of the river and in the Karatau mountain region). The ancient state of Kangju with a possible center in Otrar

62 Skripkin 1982, 51–54; Krivosheev and Skripkin 2006, 128–134. See also Shelov 1974. The reasons for the emergence and spread of the catacomb ritual in the North Caucasus and the surrounding territories are still unclear, since this ritual is not typical not only for the Sarmatians, but also for the local population in earlier times. It could be argued that several specific regions with different versions of the catacomb ritual formed in the areas of contact between the older Caucasian steppe peoples and steppe newcomers, which could indicate different ethnic communities (Abramova, Krasil'nikov, and Piatykh 2004, 61–62). Not surprisingly, M. Magomedov associates one of these versions with the Khazars. The scholar accepts that the catacomb burial ritual, defined by him as Khazar, stems from the traditions of Middle Asia (Magomedov 1994, 33–34 and 91–97).

63 Skripkin 1982, 54.

was also located in this territory and the populations of the two cultures played an important role in it. It is assumed that the name Kangju derives from the old and mythical Turanian center Kangha (Kang). It brings memories of the times when Iran and Turan separated and when the Turanians were led by Afrasiab, later considered the founder of many of the steppe Iranian-speaking or Turkic-speaking tribes and peoples. The name Kang or Kangha was also used for the Syr Darya River. Ancient Kangha probably became the empire Kangju around the second century BC; the last mention of it dates from 270 AD. In the fifth century, Kangju was a small area, subject to the Hephthalites.[64]

Of special interest is the Dzhetyasar culture (eighth-seventh century BC to the ninth century AD), which—despite its crossroad location on the lower reaches of the Syr Darya, where practically all the steppe migrations passed[65]—is particularly conservative. The Lower Syr Darya has almost always been the center of nomadic unions from the Southeastern, Eastern and Northern Cis-Aral Regions. Often nomads would migrate southward from these regions, passing through the lower reaches of the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya, before continuing on towards the southern regions of Middle Asia, to the Hindu Kush Mountains and the deserts of Central Iran.[66]

The economy of the Dzhetyasar culture was mixed and consisted of stock-breeding and agriculture, with the stock-breeders using the Dzhetyasar oasis for their winter pasture-ground. In the summertime, they usually migrated towards the pastures around the Ilek and the Ural Rivers. There they interacted with an Ugrian and Sarmatian population. Thus, this annual north-south migration helped cultivate closer ties between these ethnic groups during the whole existence of the Dzhetyasar culture. This is why the connection between the Dzhetyasarians and the Sauromatians from the Volga Region is indicated by similarities in their archaeological culture and anthropological type. As a result, the area between the South Cis-Ural Region and the lower reaches of the Syr Darya can be perceived as a single economic and cultural zone as early as the fourth-third century BC. In the second century BC, the Sarmatian cultural influence reached south of Bukhara, which is consistent with the possible involvement of Sarmatians of the Cis-Ural Region in the defeat of Bactria.[67]

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64 Kliashtornyi 1964, 163–167 and 173–174; Kliashtornyi and Sultanov 2000, 25; Vainberg 1990, 92, 100, 203–204, 209–210, 280–283, and 302–303; Levina 1996, 375–376 and 1998, 56; Andrialov and Levina 1979, 97; P'iankov 2001, 337.

65 Andrialov and Levina 1979, 94.

66 Vainberg 1990, 118–119.

67 Vainberg 1990, 98–99 and 181–182; Smirnov 1964, 192, 197, 287–288, and 290; Fedorov and Fedorov 1978, 54 express a similar point of view, the latter postulating that "even in

Not surprisingly, B. Litvinskii perceives Kangju as the spreader of Sarmatian influence over the Ferghana region.[68] It could be argued that Dzhetyasar stock-breeders migrated not only towards the Ural, but also towards the summer pastures in the area around the Irtysh River. One example of this is the mutual use of pastures by the Kimeks and the Oghuz during the ninth and tenth centuries.[69]

The conservativeness of the Dzhetyasar culture allows for the different influences it experienced to be perceived not only as the result of a cultural interaction, but also as an organic integration of foreign ethnic groups among the Dzhetyasarians. On the other hand, areas that have fallen under the Dzhetyasar influence are easier to distinguish, which usually also reveals information about the migrations of this population. Several waves of migrations occurred on the Dzhetyasar territory, all carried out by populations of different origins and at different times. Thus, in the second century BC, Sakas settled along the lower reaches of the Syr Darya, having come from Zhetysu, after being ousted by the Wusuns. Around this time the Ugrian population undertook several migrations from the forest-steppe areas of the Irtysh, Tobol and the Ishim Rivers, including the Gorokhovo culture (fourth century BC–first-second century AD) and the Sargat culture (fourth century BC–second-third century AD), along with Ugrians from the Ural River region. Certain elements in the pottery suggest the presence of a population from South Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, related ethnically to the Yuezhi (Tocharians) and the Huns. Until the second century AD, a population that came from the region of the Middle Syr Darya (the Otrar-Karatau culture) also continued to settle there. A mass migration of Huns to the Dzhetyasar region may be presumed only after the first century AD. Their continuous presence there is also seen as plausible from the second to the fourth century AD, which could explain the relations between the Huns and the Iranians, Yuezhi and the Ugrians. During the fourth century, a growth can even be presumed in the influence of tribes, connected to the Huns. The continuous presence of foreign cultural elements, introduced to the Dzhetyasar culture, shows the strength of the bonds between the

ancient times a kinship and cultural proximity occurred between the aboriginals from the region along the Lower Volga Region and the population of the Pre-Caucasus steppes and the people from the South Trans-Ural Region and Western Kazakhstan".

68 Litvinskii 1976, 55.

69 Kliashtornyi and Sultanov 2000, 120.

newcomers and their respective areas of previous habitation, as well as the process of their natural assimilation.[70]

Significant changes in the Dzhetyasar culture appear only after the fifth to sixth centuries. They are associated with the influx of Turkic-speaking tribes. It was then that the gradual Turkicization of the Dzhetyasarians began; it increased after the eighth century and is seen as a consequence of the Pecheneg union influence. Constantine Porphyrogenitus states that the three most eminent tribes among the Pechenegs that migrated to Europe in the ninth century were called Kangar. It is presumed that this ethnonym appeared in the fifth century (because of the mention of Kangar south of the Caucasus at that time) and is a result of the Turkicization of the local Dzhetyasar population, which the Pecheneg tribal union was based upon. The last phase of this culture is associated precisely with the Pechenegs and the Oghuz that came in their place in the ninth century.[71]

The Dzhetyasarians also migrated to various regions in Asia and Europe. They usually resettled to the west, in the direction of the North Caucasus and the Volga Region (the third and fourth, sixth to seventh and the eighth centuries) and south along the mainstream of the Syr Darya towards Ferghana and the Bukhara area (the third to fourth and sixth to seventh centuries). The presence of the Dzhetyasarians in various parts of Europe and Asia is evidenced by the specific ceramics, building traditions and burial rites that they brought with them. Hence, it is believed that a Dzhetyasar influence can be observed in the Saltovo culture, as well as in the Bakhmutino culture (the third to seventh centuries) of the Ugrian population in the Volga Region. The emergence of the Kerder culture in Khwarezm during the eighth century is also a result of a Dzhetyasar migration. As it will be shown later on in the book, Khwarezm was closely related to Khazaria, especially during the ninth to tenth centuries.

As an anthropological type, the Dzhetyasarians belonged to three Caucasoid types with a Mongoloid admixture: the Pamir-Ferghana type (of Transoxiana), the East-Mediterranean one and the Near Eastern (Khorasani) type. Traditionally, the male population of the Dzhetyasar culture was anthropologically close to the Sauromatians and the Sarmatians from the Ural area, as well as to the population of the Tuva region and the Tagar culture. The

70 Vainberg 1990, 120, 188, 193, and 279; Levina 1996, 195–196, 241, 247–248, and 373–374; Levina 1968, 178; Levina 1981, 171–173; Levina 1998, 53–55.

71 Andrialov and Levina 1979, 96–98; Levina 1998, 55 and 1996, 374; Vainberg 1990, 100–101, 185, 188, 283–285, and 293; Kliashtornyi 1964, 175–177; Pritsak, 1981b, no. 10, 6–8; Spinei 2003, 94, 113, and 178–179.

Dzhetyasarians had a considerable influence over the ethnogenesis and culture of many Eurasian tribes. The issues linked to the ethnic appearance of the Tocharians, Alans, Hephthalite-Chionites, Avars, the Oghuz and the Pechenegs are closely related to the Dzhetyasar culture and the Kangju state.[72] B. Vainberg also includes the Bulgars and Khazars among these people.

The main problem with the theory of B. Vainberg is the late dating of the arrival of the Bulgars, and the Khazars as well, in Europe—the sixth century. This theory follows the chronology of the emergence of state entities among the steppe tribes in Europe—the Bulgar and Khazar states were created after the unification of the Sabirs. Since the Sabirs came to Europe in the fifth century, the Bulgars and Khazars followed. This point of view is odd, considering the reliable accounts regarding the presence of Bulgars in Europe before the Sabirs' arrival.[73] As for the Khazars, since it is rarely assumed that their arrival in Europe occurred simultaneously with that of the Bulgars, the sixth century is generally regarded as a safe date for marking their presence north of the Caucasus.[74] The theory of the common origin of the Khazars and the Bulgars is the result of later accounts (from the ninth and tenth centuries) from Eastern sources and in particular from Al-Istakhri, according to whom the language of the Khazars was neither Turkic nor Persian, but was close to the Bulgar tongue.[75]

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72 Levina 1968, 178; Levina 1981, 172–175; Levina 1996, 28, 89, and 375–376; Levina 1998, 55–56; Andrialov and Levina 1979, 95–97; Vainberg 1990, 100–101, 185, and 192–194.

73 Vainberg 1990, 285–286 and 294–296; Regarding the Bulgars, the opinion of B. Vainberg is somewhat contradictory. She ties them to the niche burials (*podboy*), which appeared on the territory of the Dzhetyasar culture in the fifth century and were practiced until its demise (in the ninth century). B. Vainberg assumes that this may be a result of the migration of a population from Turpan (of a possible Tocharian origin) or from Europe, presuming that a certain part of the tribes, subject to the Huns, moved back eastward (Vainberg 1990, 187 and 193–194). While not being directly connected to the Bulgars, the pit burials with niches, which were traditional for the Dzhetyasar culture, are of greater interest. This type of burial rites died away in the third to fourth centuries, the last actual pit burials occurring in the fifth century. These burials, however, were practiced among the Bulgars between the eighth and the tenth centuries (see for instance Rashev 2003a, 16–41; Flerova 2002, 173). According to Vainberg 1990, 292–295, the Bulgars came from Eastern Kazakhstan (along the Irtysh River), migrating there in the fifth century as a part of the Tele tribes, which moved westward after 540.

74 Artamonov 1962, 116. Zuckerman 2001, 313 is of a different opinion, claiming that in the sixth century the Khazars were not located north of the Caucasus, but in the Volga area; Dunlop 1967, 5 and 32 believes that the arrival of the Khazars in Europe took place at the end of the sixth century.

75 Stepanov 1999a, 30; Novosel'tsev 1990, 78.

It is generally accepted that the Bulgars came to Europe either slightly earlier or during the Hunnic invasion. The accounts that mention Bulgars, Khazars and Barsils in the North Caucasus or along the lower reaches of the Volga during and after the second century AD (the third to fourth centuries), are considered untrustworthy by some historians and are even rejected due to the fact that they stem from later sources.[76] Other scientists, however, find it completely plausible that these accounts reflect the presence of the named tribes in the indicated region precisely during the second century or the first several centuries AD. In the second century, Sabirs were also mentioned in the Northern Cis-Caspian Region.[77] It should also be borne in mind that the earliest accounts of the Huns north of the Caspian Sea date from the second century.[78] Since that was the time when the Late Sarmatian culture began to develop there, the presence of the Huns is not accepted, as they were Turkic-speaking,[79] which, on the other hand, is not certain. In other words, the argument of the Turko-lingualism of the Huns is not sufficient to reject the possibility of their presence in some numbers in the Lower Volga area during the second century AD. According to M. Artamonov, it is even possible that at that time some of their troops had reached as far as the Dnieper to the west.[80] The Huns are visible in the Dzhetyasar culture as early as the first century AD. Given the close links between this region and the Northern Caspian Sea coast, a Hunnic presence there should not be surprising.

We know nothing of the language of any of the tribes mentioned in the sources from Eastern Europe for the period between the fifth and the seventh centuries. The theories on the Ugric linguistic affiliation of some of them (e.g. the Sabirs),[81] as well as the existence of a specific Turkic group (the so-called Oghor or Oghur group),[82] which the Bulgars and Khazars were a part of, are no more than hypothetical. There is no information to support the idea that

76 See for instance Dunlop 1967, 8–9; Artamonov 1962, 115–116; Novosel'tsev 1990, 83–84; Shapira 2007, 312–315.

77 Stepanov 1999a, 30–31; Magomedov 1994, 24–27; Giuzelev, 1999, 61. On the Sabirs in particular, see Fedorov and Fedorov 1978, 53.

78 Artamonov 1962, 42; Novosel'tsev 1990, 69–70; Fedorov and Fedorov 1978, 28–29 and 47–48. It is possible that the Huns were confused with the Chionites, but they are associated mainly with the southern regions of Middle Asia and their presence in the Volga Region at that time is highly questionable (see Vainberg 1990, 256–257).

79 See for instance Skripkin 1982, 51. See also the discussion on the pages of *Rossiiskaia Arkheologiia*: Moshkova 2007; Malashev 2007; Moshkova, Malashev, and Bolelov 2007.

80 Artamonov 1962, 42.

81 Artamonov 1962, 65–66; Novosel'tsev 1990, 81–83; see also Pritsak 1981b, no. 5, 17–30.

82 Golden 1980, 30–34; Novosel'tsev 1990, 85.

all these tribes shared the same ethnicity the way M. Artamonov believes, calling all of them Bulgars.[83] The fact that from the seventh century onwards only Bulgars and Khazars are mentioned in the steppes of Eastern Europe (fragmentary accounts depict the Sabirs and the Barsils as already being part of Bulgar or Khazar unions) indicates the merging of many of the tribes in these two large communities, but does not entail that in the period between the fifth and the seventh centuries they constituted a single whole. The same applies to the identification of the Sabirs with the Khazars, which is seen in the works of Al-Masudi.[84] This should not be understood in an ethnic sense, since the main lands of the Khazars were actually former lands of the Sabirs. On the other hand, the archaeological culture associated with the Bulgars between the eighth and tenth centuries is quite homogenous and specific, allowing for the assumption that their ethnic and cultural differentiation was present also in the previous period.

According to B. Vainberg, it is quite possible that the Khazars emerged as a tribal group in the area around the middle reaches of the Syr Darya. This is indicated not only by similarities between the Dzhetyasar culture and some elements in the pottery (especially in the Terek-Sulak Interfluve, between the third and the eighth centuries) and the burial rites (the pit graves with niches) of the Eastern European population, but also by an account by Al-Khwarizmi from the 830s. In his *Book on the Appearance of the Earth* he mentions the city Al-Khazar, located on the middle reaches of the Syr Darya.[85] Suhrab, who copied Al-Khwarizmi's work in the first half of the tenth century, calls the Syr Darya "the river of the Khazar".[86] On the basis of Claudius Ptolemy's *Geography* (second century AD) Al-Khwarizmi located Al-Khazar in Inner Scythia. B. Vainberg and T. Kalinina associate these accounts with the *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian (twelfth century).[87] According to him, during the reign of the Byzantine emperor Maurice (582–602) three brothers, only two of whom are mentioned by name—Khazar(ig) and Bolgar(ios), set out from Inner Scythia and more precisely from Mount Imeon.[88] Bolgar left his brothers

83 According to Artamonov 1962, 127–128, the intermixing of the Sabirs and the Khazars was facilitated by their common ethnicity: both were actually Bulgars.

84 Golden 1980, 133; Dunlop 1967, 27–28.

85 Vainberg 1990, 221, 287; on this account, see also Kalinina 1988, 17–18, 39–40, 50, and 74–76; Kalinina 2002, 46–47; Kalinina 2005a, 103; Kalinina 2006, 30.

86 Vainberg 1990, 287; Kalinina 1988, 117 and 125; Kalinina 2006, 30.

87 Vainberg 1990, 286–287; Kalinina 2006, 30; Kalinina 2002, 46; Kalinina 2005a, 103.

88 On the various aspects of the translation regarding Imeon, see Stepanov 1999a, 26. Several different views exist on the location of Imeon. It could be the Tian Shan, Pamir, Pamir and Hindu Kush, or the whole mountain range of Tian Shan-Pamir-Hindu Kush.

and asked the Byzantine emperor for land to settle in, which he received. The rest travelled to the land of the Alans, called Barsilia,[89] and later its population took on the name of the elder brother Khazar.

This source is cited in almost every work on the origin of the Bulgars and Khazars. It raises several questions. According to D. Dunlop, Michael the Syrian indicates the time of the Khazars' arrival in Europe (the end of the sixth century).[90] This cannot be accepted because of the mention of Bolgar and as for the Bulgars, the end of the sixth century is too late a date. From the viewpoint of Bulgarian history, there are several possibilities. In R. Rashev's opinion, the text depicts the migrations of the Bulgars of Khan Asparukh and their settlement south of the Danube. The text is pervaded by the political vision of Byzantium, which distorts historical facts.[91]

If R. Rashev is correct, this hardly means that Michael the Syrian invented the legend of the three brothers. More likely, it reflects notions that existed in the twelfth century and that indicate the kinship between the Bulgars and the Khazars and the place they came from. But "whether the aforementioned account of Michael the Syrian actually depicts one of the last westward migrations of the Proto-Bulgarian tribes, or it can be seen as a concise version of the vast spaces our ancient forefathers had to cross to come to Europe, it is difficult to say today".[92] Some scholars assume that the name of the third brother could have been Barsil. They base their assumption on the account of Al-Kalbi, according to whom Barsil was the brother of Khazar.[93] While Al-Kalbi's account implies a kinship between the Khazars and the Barsils, it is the account of Michael the Syrian that does not permit such a conclusion, because the other two brothers settled in a land that already bore the name Barsilia and belonged to the Alans. Further on, however, the text begins to sound somewhat contradictory: "Furthermore, the Bulgars and Puguraye [who inhabited Misia and Dacia] that formed the inhabitants [of Berzilia's cities] became Christians, in good time. When the foreign people took over that land [Berzilia], they named themselves Khazars from the name of the elder brother".[94] The text does not refer to the Alans but to an ethnic group that could be close to the Bulgars;

89 There are also different views regarding the location of Barsilia. See for instance Artamonov 1962, 130; Dimitrov 1987, 39; Golden 1980, 143–147; Novosel'tsev 1990, 79; Zuckerman 2001, 327–328; Magomedov 1994, 24ff.

90 Dunlop 1967, 5.

91 Rashev 2003b, 373–383 and 2007a, 17–25.

92 Stepanov 1999a, 26.

93 Pletneva 1976, 15; Artamonov 1962, 132; Magomedov 1994, 50.

94 Quoted from Rashev 2003b, 374.

alternatively, this account could denote the time when the Khazars ousted the Bulgars from the Lower Volga Region and Dagestan, regardless of Bolgar's separation and his settlement in the lands of Byzantium. In this sense, the name of the third brother could really be Barsil, as far as the Barsils are closely related to the Bulgars. However, the account of Michael the Syrian does not allow for clear conclusions to be drawn.

The information on the city Al-Khazar shows the alleged presence of Khazars near the middle reaches of the Syr Darya during the ninth and tenth centuries, but not necessarily their land of origin, since the presence of the ethnonym Khazars there could be the result of a migration. According to B. Vainberg, the emergence in Europe of one of the oldest types of burials of the Dzhetyasar culture (the pit graves with niches) reflects the arrival of the Khazars (as well as the emergence of the ethnonym "Kangar" in Transcaucasia in the fifth century), the latest date of this migration being the fifth century. At that time the Dzhetyasarians began to gradually abandon this type of burial (but the process was ongoing from the third century).[95] If this was the case, then naturally not all Khazars migrated westward, which is evidenced by the mention of Al-Khazar on the Middle Syr Darya in the ninth century. According to B. Vainberg, "with the Bulgars and Khazars came the end of the eastward movement in Europe of this group of tribes that preceded the arrival of the Turks".[96]

The account about Al-Khazar is perhaps the most indisputable piece of information regarding the Khazar presence in Asia. In this aspect, of special interest is the *Ebstorf Mappa Mundi* from the thirteenth century, which includes Samarkha, a city in Khazaria, in the Scythian region, situated on the river Bactra (probably the Band-e Amir River in Afghanistan) that rises in the Caucasus and empties into the Ocean. Usually, Samarkha is identified with Samarkand. L. Chekin, however, disagrees with this view, believing that Samarkha could have been located in the Khazar lands in the Caucasus.[97] The remaining information is too vague with regard to a possible relation to the Khazars. Namely, the reference to the "Ko-sa" in Chinese sources, or the "Kasar", seen in Uyghur inscriptions (Ko-sa is the name of the sixth of the nine Uyghur tribes).[98] This could indeed indicate a Khazar presence in the Uyghur Khaganate, but can hardly reveal anything more on that subject. The same goes for the western area of the Uyghur Khaganate that was mentioned by the name of Kasar in the *Terkhin Inscription* (eighth century), except perhaps for

95 Vainberg 1990, 187,194, 284, and 291.

96 Vainberg 1990, 296.

97 Chekin 2005, 346–366.

98 Dunlop 1967, 34–35; Golden 1980, 132; Shirota 2005.

the fact that a tribe bearing the name Khazar was part of the Uyghur state.[99] It is yet unclear how to interpret the account from the same inscription about Kadir Khazar and Bedi Barsil, who died as glorified Oghuz probably during the second half of the sixth century. According to S. Kliashtornyi, it shows the close relations between the Khazars and the Barsils and the Oghur-Oghuz tribal union.[100]

According to one interesting account, Alexander the Great met the Khazars somewhere between Merv and Herat. In D. Dunlop's opinion, this statement "would be very important as evidence of the extension of Khazar activity far east of the Caspian at some time", but since many of the Alexander stories are so remote from fact it cannot lead to some clear conclusions.[101]

1.2 The Community of Togarmah

In his letter to Hasdai ibn Shaprut the Khazar ruler Joseph explains that he is a descendant of Khazar, the seventh son of Togarmah, who in turn is a son of Japheth. Overall, ten sons of Togarmah are named, of whom only Avar, Bulgar, Sawir and probably Oghuz can be deciphered. Presumably, the name of the first son, Agior/Avior, stands for the name Iber, i.e. the forefather of the Caucasian Iberians. It can also be read as Ugor. While assumptions have been made regarding the other names as well, their interpretations remain quite vague.[102]

The genealogical approach that traces the origin of a ruler or people from one of the sons of Noah (Shem, Ham and Japheth) is typical for the historiography of Jews, Christians and Muslims. It reflects the geographical distribution of the various peoples across the Earth: Noah bequeathed Africa to Ham, the Arabian Peninsula, Iran and Iraq to Shem and to Japheth he gave the territories, located north and east of Shem's lands. The idea of a cultural and ethnic differentiation becomes prominent in the same genealogical lines at the time when their descendants are named. Thus, Togarmah and his descendants should signify a certain community in the territorial or cultural sense. Actually, Togarmah was not the son of Japheth, but of his son, Gomer. In the Bible (the Old Testament) Togarmah is mentioned only four times. Of special interest is the account from the *Book of the Prophet Ezekiel* (Ezekiel 27:14, 38:6)

99 Kliashtornyi 1980, 87–90 and 95; Róna-Tas 2005, 112–113.

100 Kliashtornyi 2005, 261–264.

101 Dunlop 1967, 14–15.

102 See Kokovtsov 1932; Pletneva 1976, 7; Magomedov 1994, 10.

(Togarmah is mentioned twice there), which allows for the conclusion that the "house of Togarmah" incorporated the equestrian peoples.[103] *The Book of Joseph* (Josippon), compiled by a Jewish author in Italy during the tenth century, also contains the names of Togarmah's descendants. The list there begins with Khazar (Kozar), followed by Pacinak (the Pechenegs), Alan, Bulgar, Kanbinah, Turq, Buz, Zakhukh, Ugr, Tolmaz. It is emphasized that these people live in the north, with only Bulgar, Pacinak and Ugr living by the Danube and the rest inhabiting an area along the Volga.[104]

P. Golden believes that the genealogy, used by the Khazar ruler Joseph, is a testament to a new ideology in Khazaria, a consequence of the adoption of Judaism. According to him, "in the Middle Ages [Togarmah] was viewed by Jews as the progenitor of the Turkic peoples". The loans from the Christian and Muslim tradition should also lead to a similar interpretation.[105]

If the Jewish tradition is to be judged on the basis of *The Book of Joseph*, it does not refer to Turkic peoples, but rather to people that inhabited the territory between the Danube and the Volga; named among them are also ethnic groups of Iranian and Ugrian origin.

Additional details are provided by the *Cambridge Document* (the *Schechter Letter*), which was probably written by a Khazar Jew who believed that the Khazars (or the Khazar Jews?) descended from the line of Simeon. The anonymous author stresses that he does not know whether this assertion is true. According to Eldad HaDani, whose account is part of the same tradition, the Khazars are Jews—a fragment of Simeon's line and the semi-line of Manasseh.[106]

According to another genealogical line, related to Arabo-Persian beliefs, the Khazars are descendants of Abraham and more precisely of his son Isaac. And according to Al-Kalbi (who died in 819) the children of Isaac are Khazar, B-z-ra, Barsul, Khwarezm and Fil (the name of one of the ancient cities of Khwarezm). Another legend mentions the encounter between the Khazars and the sons of Keturah (the wife of Abraham), which occurred somewhere in Khorasan. According to the same tradition, the descendants of Keturah are

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103 Stamatov 1997, 107–113.

104 Petrukhin 1995a, 25–38 and 1998, 272–274. Dobrev 1998b, 30–35 specifically studies this source but for some reason asserts that the Khazars are not mentioned there, having previously quoted the text where they are at the very beginning of the list. His following conclusions are based on the impression that the list begins with the Pechenegs, which makes them difficult to accept.

105 Golden 2003, no. 3, 150.

106 Artamonov 1962, 265–266; see also the text of the *Cambridge Document* in Golb and Pritzak 1997, 138–142.

the Turks. Among the descendants of Abraham's sons are also the Kyrgyz and the Sogdians. In this context, it should be borne in mind that in his letter to Hasdai ibn Shaprut, Joseph stresses that Bulan chose the Judaic religion as the faith of Abraham.[107]

The Arabo-Persian authors usually include the Khazars among the descendants of Japheth without specifically mentioning Togarmah or his other sons. Al-Yaqubi (the ninth century) gives a more precise account, providing two genealogies of the Khazars. According to the first one, they are descendants of the son of Japheth Meshech, who is considered the primogenitor of the Turks. The other genealogy presents the Khazars (along with the Bulgars, Alans and the Armenians) as descendants of the son of Japheth, Togarmah (!—the third descendant in line), and geographically links them with the peoples from the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea Region.[108] The presentation of Togarmah as a son of Japheth is consistent with Joseph's Reply and shows the possibility that the Khazar ruler was not directly following the Jewish tradition. This raises the question of whether the Khazar ruler was not conveying a genealogy that was much closer to Muslim beliefs. Such a connection could possibly be sought also with regard to the mention of Abraham in the letter to Hasdai ibn Shaprut. The common trait that unifies Al-Yaqubi's account and *The Book of Joseph* (if it is to be regarded as an example of Jewish genealogical views in the Early Middle Ages) lies in the geographical areas, which the Khazars are said to come from. V. Petrukhin believes that *Joseph's Reply* and *The Book of Joseph* follow different traditions because of the inconsistency in the mentioned peoples. In other words, the two sources are independent from each other.[109]

In immediate vicinity to Khazaria, the Georgian and Armenian genealogical tradition identifies Togarmah as the primogenitor of the Caucasian peoples. His descendants include the Armenians, Georgians, the Caucasian Albanians and the peoples of Dagestan.[110] In the second half of the twelfth century, the Jewish traveler Petahia of Regensburg crossed the land of the Khazars (the Crimean Peninsula) and continued on to the land of Togarmah—Transcaucasia and in particular Georgia.[111] I think it is quite possible that the notion of Togarmah

107 Tolsov 1948b, 288; Dunlop 1967, 13–14; Poliak 2001, 99.

108 Kalinina 2005a, 101–102 and 2005b, 251; Dunlop 1967, 12.

109 Petrukhin 1995a, 36 with n. 2.

110 Novosel'tsev 1990, 76. According to Movses Kalankatvatsi, the following peoples descended from the sons of Gomer (Japheth's son): the Sarmatians from Ashkenaz, the Sauromatians from Riphath and the Armenians from Torgom (Movses Kalankatvatsi. *Istoria Strany Aluank* 1.2, in Smbatian 1984).

111 Artamonov 1962, 446.

could have been adopted in Khazaria from the Caucasian Christian tradition. The close links between Caucasian Albania and the steppe population existed as early as the Late Sarmatian period (the second to fourth centuries), when the bearers of this culture settled in the Terek-Sulak Inferfluve, reaching the Cis-Caspian Lowland of Dagestan in the south. Already at that time the steppe population adopted certain traits of the local culture. This process continued also in the so-called Early Khazar period (the seventh to eighth centuries), when the center of the Khazar state was situated within the territory of Dagestan.[112] During the sixth and seventh centuries, Christian missionaries were sent there several times specifically from Caucasian Albania. Thus, in the first quarter of the sixth century the bishop of Arran (Caucasian Albania) Kardusat spent fourteen years among the Huns and translated the Bible into their language. The next one to preach among the Huns in Dagestan after Kardusat was bishop Makarios. The Huns in turn revered the Christian missionaries as their teachers. A classical example of the Albanian church's work in Dagestan is the mission of bishop Israel in the Kingdom of the Huns in 682.[113]

It is possible that between the seventh century and the first half of the eighth century the Khazar rulers considered the lands of Caucasian Albania (or more precisely today's Azerbaijan) a heritage, left by the Persian Sassanid dynasty, for which they had fought with the Arabs. On the other hand, according to the Turko-Byzantine agreement of 627, the territory of Caucasian Albania was given to the Turkic Khaganate.[114] In other words, it is possible that the domination over Eastern Transcaucasia represented an important part of the political ideology of the Khazars and thus it is no surprise that they fought fiercely with the Arabs precisely for these lands up to the 730s.

According to the chronicle of Ibn al-Faqih (903), the city Balanjar in the land of the Khazars was built by the son of Japheth, Balanjar. Several centuries

112 See Magomedov 1983 and 1994; Gadzhiev 2002; Fedorov and Fedorov 1978. In view of the notion of Togarmah being the forefather of the Armenians it should be borne in mind that in the eighth century the Arabic province (division) Armenia (Arminiyya) also included the territory of Azerbaijan, i.e. Caucasian Albania (Kalinina 1988, 134–135). According to Armenian literary tradition, the Arsacid dynasty is divided into four branches: Parthian, Armenian, Indian (Kushan) and Massagetean (the rulers of the north) (Tolstov 1947b, 48–49). On the other hand, according to the Cambridge Document, the Khazar Jews inhabited or passed through Armenia (Arminiyya) before settling in Khazaria. It is important to bear in mind that the Caucasian sources note the traditional relations between the Khazar Jews and the northern "nomadic" peoples (see Shapira 2007b). It is then quite possible that the idea of Togarmah's origins was not alien to the Khazar Jews as well.

113 Stepanov 2005a, 70; Kliashtornyi 2000, 120.

114 Artamonov 1962, 151; Poliak 2001, 86.

later, the Egyptian scholar Al-Qalqashandi (1355–1418) associated the land of the Khazars with the son of Japheth, Balanjar.[115] M. Magomedov believes that the city and the land Balanjar with a center in the Terek-Sulak Inferfluve (the Verkhnii Chiriurt hillfort) are identical to Barsilia and the Barsils. The scholar, who considers the Barsils a Bulgar tribe, stresses that in *Derbent-Name* the old name of Balanjar was Bulkhar (or Balkh). On the other hand, it should be borne in mind that according to the Byzantine tradition (the Chronicle of Theophanes), the Khazars originated from Barsilia.[116] In this context, the above-cited account of Al-Kalbi deserves another mention—according to it, Barsil is the brother of Khazar from the offspring of Abraham.

These accounts suggest that it is possible that the Khazars, like the Persians and some Turkic peoples, let Biblical genealogy merge with local traditions and genealogical lines. Thus, according to Rashid Al-Din (1247–1318) the Turkic tribes stem from the four sons of Dib Bakuy, the son of Abulja Khan, who in turn was the son of Nuh (Noah). Noah bequeathed to Abulja Khan the lands to the north, northeast and northwest (i.e. Japheth's lands). Again according to the same source, the grandsons of Noah are called Kara Khan, Ur Khan, Kur Khan and Kuz (Kaz) Khan. Oghuz Khagan (the forefather of the Oghuz) is a son of Kara Khan.[117] According to Al-Tabari, Turk is the son of Japheth and an anonymous work from the twelfth century (*Short Tales and Stories*) mentions seven sons of Japheth: Chin, Turk, Khazar, Manbal (or Saqlab), Rus, Misk and Kimari who is the forefather of the Bulgars and the Burtas. Oghuz is the grandson of Misk.[118] Al-Tabari merges Biblical tradition with the Persian one and so Afridun (or Fereydun), the first ruler of the Earth (and common primogenitor of the Turks), becomes equivalent to Noah.[119]

According to Iranian tradition, Fereydun had three sons—Salm, Tur and Iraj, and Tur received the lands of China and Turan. The territory of Turan encompassed the lands between China, the Amu Darya and the Volga.[120] The first mythical ruler of Turan (from the offspring of Tur), as was already stated, was Afrasiab and his center was Kangha on the Middle Syr Darya. Al-Tabari, Al-Biruni and Ibn Khaldun all saw Afrasiab as a descendant of the Iranian

115 Kalinina 2005b, 251–252.

116 Magomedov 1994, 54–66 and 1989, 25–31; see also Novosel'tsev 1990, 83–84; see the text of the Chronicle of Theophanes in Theophanes Confessor. *Chronographia*, in Duichev, Cankova-Petkova et al. 1960, 262; see the text of *Derbent-Name* in Orazaev 1993.

117 Korogly 1976, 21–22.

118 Korogly 1976, 85 and 88.

119 Kalinina 2005b, 252.

120 Korogly 1976, 90–91 and 1983, 80–84; see also Dunlop 1967, 13; Vainberg 1990, 280–281.

culture hero Rostam, who was the son of Turk. During the tenth century, Afrasiab was perceived as the leader (primogenitor) of the Turkic tribes and a fusion occurred between the notion of ancient Iranian-dialect speaking Turan and the Turks. According to Ferdowsi, Kara Khan, the father of Oghuz Khagan, was the fourth son of Afrasiab. Thus, according to the Muslim Turko-Persian beliefs, Afrasiab was one of the children of Japheth, the son of Noah (equivalent to Fereydun).[121]

Targitaus should also be included in the Noah-Fereydun connection—he was the first man and ancestor of the Scythians (Scythes was one of his sons). The genealogical origin of Targitaus ensures the legitimacy of the dynasty, which, in a similar way as with the Iranians, is derived from the lineage of Fereydun;[122] in the case of Turan it is Afrasiab. It is no coincidence that in the tenth century Al-Masudi noted that "the Khagan of Khagans" descended from the Karluks, whose dynasty was connected to Afrasiab and Shana (Ashina).[123]

The use of the name Togarmah by the Khazar ruler Joseph shows, on the one hand, the notion of the dynasty's legitimacy and, on the other, that it belonged to a certain community that regarding the tenth century could be called Turkic (but not only) with no reference to the ethnic sense of the term.

For the Arabo-Persian authors from this period, the majority of the peoples living in the north were Turks, but in a theoretical, geographical sense,[124] which directly connected them to the descendants of the mythical Tur and the population of Turan. According to Kh. Korogly, the word "Turk" signified "a political union of diverse tribes". As a result of the assimilation of the local Iranic-speaking population a new ethnic term appeared: "Middle Asian Turks" who successfully synthesized two cultures—the Iranian and the Turkic one".[125] The scholar believes that the identification of the Turanians with Turks that inhabited Turkestan and the Turkic Khaganate occurred already at the time when the nomad Turks arrived in Eastern Turkestan and, by the tenth century, every author perceived Turan as the habitat of the Turkic tribes. But in the eleventh century the assimilation process between the local Iranian languages of Turkmenistan and the Turkic language of the Oghuz was not yet complete.[126]

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121 Korogly 1976, 91–94; Kalinina 2005b, 252.

122 Raevskii, 1985, 144–145 and 1977, 86.

123 Kliashtornyi and Sultanov 2000, 105–106. The genealogical link to Afrasiab applies to all or almost all of the ruling dynasties from the Middle Syr Darya region, including the Karakhanids and Seljuqids (Vainberg 1990, 92 and 206).

124 Kalinina 2005b, 253.

125 Korogly 1983, 15.

126 Korogly 1976, 10 and 91.

Actually, the term "Turk" lost its ethnic meaning after the Arabs conquered most of Middle Asia in the mid-eighth century. Subsequently, it stood for many and different in origin ethnic groups and tribes—something typical only for the Arabic written tradition from this period (the ninth to eleventh centuries).[127] Thus, the statement of Saadia (Said) Gaon Al-Fayyumi (892–942): "Togarmah is the Khazars, and they are Turkmen",[128] should not be seen as a reference to an ethnic term, but rather to a cultural and geographical community.

In nomadic societies, the idea of a common origin, transmitted through similar genealogical lineages, helps unite the often multiethnic and multilingual community. These genealogies allow for the easier inclusion of foreign groups and tribes that are external for a specific community. The genealogical kinship lines are important also in a foreign political sense, with regard to the relations between the different nomadic tribes.[129] For the Khazar ruler Joseph his descent from Togarmah ensured his dynasty the right to rule over his descendants, and not only in theory, but also in reality, since the named peoples come mostly from Khazaria. This power is emphasized already at the beginning of the letter where Joseph calls himself "king of Togarmah".[130]

1.3 The Title of the Khazar Ruler Joseph and the Dual Kingship in Khazaria

The peoples, listed in Joseph's Reply as descendants of Togarmah and brothers to Khazar, belong to the Turkic, Ugrian and Iranian ethno-linguistic families. Their names have not been completely deciphered, but it is clear that it is a list of ethnic groups that inhabited the steppe zone. It is possible that some of them inhabited the Caucasus, especially in view of the perception of the Caucasian peoples as descendants of Togarmah, according to the tradition that existed at that time. When he calls himself "the king of Togarmah", Joseph clearly sees himself as the ruler not only of the steppe peoples, but also of the Caucasian ones. So could the title "king of Togarmah" be a kind of interpretation of the steppe empire title *khagan*?

127 Kliashtornyi 1992, 126.

128 Poliak 2001, 86. According to Shapira 2007b, 317, calling the Khazars Turkmen hints at their origin from Inner Asia.

129 Khazanov 1994, 140–143.

130 According to Pletneva 1976, 7, this way the Khazar ruler stressed the greatness of his power that extended not only over the Khazars, but also over the rest of the Turkic peoples. Magomedov 1994, 10 expresses a similar opinion, and so does Poliak 2001, 86.

Scientists have varying opinions on whether Joseph was a khagan or a *bek* (king) of Khazaria. Joseph himself calls himself "king" (*melek*). In Eastern sources the word "king" (*malik*) refers to both the bek and the khagan.[131] Therefore, when we call Joseph a "king" without the necessary clarification, it is not clear whether we are referring to the khagan or to his vicegerent. D. Dunlop draws attention to the controversy of the sources (especially the Khazar ones) and assumes that "on the whole, it must be allowed that Joseph is the Khaqan".[132] P. Golden also uses the *khagan* title for Joseph (as well as for his predecessors Obadiah and Bulan), noting the ambiguity of the *Khazar Correspondence*.[133] S. Pletneva calls Joseph (and Obadiah) a khagan as well.[134] Joseph is considered a king (in the sense of bek) by M. Artamonov, A. Novosel'tsev and V. Petrukhin (who remains unsure as to the exact title of Bulan).[135] B. Zakhoder examines this problem in detail and sees Joseph, whom he calls both king and khagan, as the successor of the beks and the bearer of the title *khagan-bek* or *tarkhan-khagan*. During Joseph's reign the transition from diarchy to monocracy was complete.[136] Ts. Stepanov expresses a similar point of view, asserting that the title *khagan-bek*, used by Ibn Fadlan regarding the Khagan's vicegerent, marks the end of the "modernization" process in Khazaria, which was initiated by the beks in the mid-eighth century.[137]

The question of Joseph's title is part of two major topics, linked to Khazaria. The first one concerns the Khazar diarchy, the moment of its appearance and the tradition it originated from. The second one is related to the role that the Judaization played in the development of the state institutions in Khazaria. It is necessary to consider the position that the khagan's institution held in the steppe world in order to understand how Judaism could have affected the Khazar ideology and the Khazar notions of power.

The Byzantine authors (Constantine Porphyrogenitus and the Continuator of Theophanes) who mention the khagan and pekh of Khazaria do not specify the nature of their power. Certain aspects regarding this topic can be found in the *Khazar Correspondence*. They will be discussed later on. It should be emphasized that the information on the nominal power of the khagan and the

131 Novosel'tsev 1990, 138.

132 Dunlop 1967, 145. According to Dunlop 1967, 161, Bulan, whose later descendants were Obadiah and Joseph, belonged to the house from which earlier Khazar khagans stemmed.

133 Golden 1980, 79 and 169–170; Golden 2003, no. 3, 148–150.

134 Pletneva 1976, 7 and 61; Pletneva 1982, 102.

135 Artamonov 1962, 269 and 276; Novosel'tsev 1990, 136–137; Petrukhin 2001, 76.

136 Zakhoder 1962, 208–225.

137 Stepanov 2003a, 220–221.

sovereignty of the bek is entirely derived from Arabo-Persian sources from the tenth century (the earliest one is by Ibn Rustah). Without diminishing their importance, it is clear that this is a series of accounts, in which the form of government of the Magyars and the Rus' is identical to the Khazar one.

The dual kingdom (or kingship) is represented by two different models, both as a structure of state government and as an understanding of the separation of powers. According to the first one, the power is divided evenly between two rulers who govern different parts of the state. In the steppe world the state is usually divided into an eastern and a western part (a north-south division is also possible), the eastern having a higher status. Sometimes the eastern and western parts are subject to a central one, as was the case with the first significant steppe empire with a government system, documented in sources, the empire of the Huns (the Hunnu Empire). Their elite consisted of four clans, only one of which (Luandi) had the right to appoint the supreme ruler—the Chanyu. His power was sacralized and his official title was "Born by the Sky and the Earth, enthroned by the Sun and the Moon, the great Hunnic Chanyu". The formula "born by the Sky" became universally valid for all supreme steppe rulers in the following centuries. It would be safe to assume that this formula was known among the steppe tribes even before the time of the Huns.

The Hunnic Chanyu held the administrative and military power, while also performing the functions of supreme judge and high priest. Directly below him in rank were the "wise princes", one for the eastern and one for the western part of the country. They were sons or very close relatives of the Chanyu. They had considerable power and relative autonomy, including on matters concerning war and peace. The heir to the throne (the oldest son of the ruler) ruled over the Left (eastern) Wing. The representatives of the other three clans were actually exogamous partners of the ruling Luandi clan. They exercised judicial functions in the Left and Right Wing of the empire.[138] It is clear that in the case of the Huns there can hardly be talk of a diarchy. This, however, does not mean

138 Kliashtornyi and Sultanov 2000, 62–63; Kliashtornyi 2003; Stoianov 2004a, 39–40; Zhumaganbetov 2006, 156; Kradin 2001a, 138–140, 145–148, 204, and 226. Over time this system was reformed. The center was eliminated and the empire was divided into two wings, with the ruler governing the left (eastern) one. The system of succession to the throne was also changed, with the power no longer being passed from father to son, but from brother to brother, uncle to nephew, etc. (Kradin 2001a, 56, 145, 216, 225, and 227). "Eventually, the principle of *corulership* triumphed [...] the population and the territory of the nomadic community were divided into two wings, governed by two *corulers*. One of them was also the supreme ruler of the whole community. The junior wing's subjection to the senior one was often not of an actual political nature, but of a genealogical one. The position of the junior coruler was inherited within his own lineage but his successors

that they did not have a sacral king. Therefore, the sacral kingship should not necessary lead to a model that requires a vicegerent with administrative and military powers.

In the case of the Turks, the empire probably lacked a central part and was made up of two states—the Eastern and Western Khaganate. The khagan of the Eastern Khaganate was considered the supreme ruler of the Western Khaganate as well. A relative of his (initially a brother) stood at the head of the Western Khaganate and bore the title *yabghu khagan*. The sovereignty, as well as the *khagan* title belonged to one clan only—the Ashina clan. The Western Khaganate was also divided into an eastern and a western wing, initially ruled by local aristocratic families. These two wings were in fact confederations of five tribes, called Dulu (led by a *chor*) and Nushibi (led by an *erkin*). Subsequently, a representative of the yabghu khagan was sent to each of these confederations; he was a member of the Ashina clan and bore the title *shad*. The khagan of the Turks had absolute power and was regarded as a supreme judge and high priest. The celestial origin of the ruling family is emphasized in the *Orkhon inscriptions*. The khagan was the link between the Middle World and the Upper World and was thus responsible for the prosperity of his people.[139] The Karluks had a version of this system; their ruling family was a branch of the Ashina clan. In 840, when the Uyghur Khaganate collapsed, the Karluk ruler took the *khagan* title (until then it had been *yabghu*). Thus the Kara-Khanid Khaganate was born. It consisted of two tribal groups (an eastern and western one), led by khagans, with the eastern one having supreme power.[140]

In accordance with the second model for dual kingship, the supreme ruler was limited by a vicegerent who held the administrative and military powers. This division was necessary due to the sacral status of the supreme ruler, which imposed certain restrictions. He was first and foremost a religious figure that provided a link between the world of the gods and the world of men and was thus responsible both for fertility and any possible disasters, including unsuccessful wars. His power was usually hereditary and belonged to one family. The vicegerent was not a member of this family because of its sacral status. Such is the view of the sacral king, presented in the classic work of James Frazer. A typical example of such an organization is Japan during the Shogun Age.[141]

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could not claim the shared throne" (Kradin 2001a, 228). This system is very similar to the one typical for the Turkic khaganates in the following centuries.

139 Kliashtornyi and Sultanov 2000, 86–87, 141, 159, and 163; Zhumaganbetov 2006, 159–161; the same applies to the Huns (Kradin 2001a, 142).

140 Kliashtornyi and Sultanov 2000, 101 and 105–106.

141 Frazer 2006, 169.

According to the information found in Eastern sources from the tenth century, Khazaria should also be regarded as an example for this type of dual kingship. As was mentioned earlier, scholars have varying opinions on the origin of this type of government in Khazaria, as well as the time during which it existed. Broadly speaking, there are two views. According to one, the dual kingship arose in the Khazar Khaganate as a result of the Judaization of the nobility. According to the other, it was a legacy from the Turkic or the steppe tradition.

D. Dunlop associates the Khazar dual kingship with an account from 860 that deals with the government model of one of the Uyghur states in the area of Tian Shan after the khaganate's collapse (in 840). It depicts a sacral ruler without actual power who ventured outside his palace once a year (the Eastern sources claim the same thing regarding the Khazar khagan). There seems to be no vicegerent figure present, since the power was not concentrated in the hands of the ruler, but was distributed among his viziers and dignitaries.[142] According to P. Golden, who accepts the analogy made by D. Dunlop, the Khazar dual kingship is associated with the Turkic tradition and has "roots deep in Altaic antiquity".[143] Of special interest is the *äb khagan*, mentioned in a Chinese source from 801, who belonged to a non-ruling khagan family that stayed at home (*äb* means "hearth, home").[144] It's worth mentioning that both accounts (regarding the Uyghurs and the Turks) refer to the period after the collapse of the respective khaganates.

The investiture ceremony is usually seen as an example of the similarity between the Khazar government system from the tenth century and the Turkic one from the time of the First Khaganate (the sixth to seventh centuries). This is especially true for the moment of the ritual near-strangulation of the would-be ruler, when he determined the duration of his reign; this practice is practically identical in Al-Istakhri's account of the Khazars and the accounts of the Turks in the Chinese sources.[145] Given the powers of authority of the khagan in the Turkic Khaganate, this analogy emphasizes the sacral status of the khagan authority in the two states, but does not necessarily prove the existence of a dual kingship.

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142 Dunlop 1967, 39.

143 Golden 1980, 135. In his later works, P. Golden associates the Khazar dual kingship with the Iranian tradition as well (Golden 2007b, 157 and 2006, 25–26; this idea (the influence of Khwarezm and Iran on the Khazar dual kingship) is perhaps elaborated more on in his work "The Khazar Sacral Kingship". In *Pre-Modern Russia and Its World*, Wiesbaden, 2006, 79–102 (quoted from Kovalev 2005a, 236).

144 Golden 1980, 39, 100–101, and 135.

145 Golden 1980, 42.

The direct link between the Khazar government system and the Turkic one is also based on the notion that the Khazar khagan dynasty belonged to the Ashina clan. The sources, including and especially the Khazar ones, do not contain even an allusion to such a link. An exception is the quite vague account of the Khazar king, found in *Hudud al-ʿAlam*: there he is called the "tarkhan khakan of the descendants (children) of Ansa".[146]

Assuming that Ansa could be a version of Ashina, L. Gumilev and M. Artamonov suggest that one of the khagans of the Western Turkic Khaganate migrated to Khazaria. There is, however, no evidence to back up such a conclusion. This assumption is based on the entirely hypothetical link between the Khazars and the Nushibi tribal confederation. According to the two scholars, the last years of the Turkic Khaganate reflect the tension between Dulu and Nushibi, with the latter backing the khagans from the Ashina clan, which led to the Khazars accepting one of them. Because of the similarity of the names, the Bulgar ruling dynasty of Dulo is viewed as an equivalent to the Dulu confederation. This is how the conflict between the Bulgars and the Khazars during the first half of the seventh century is explained. Furthermore, Gostun (identified with Organa from the *Chronicle* of John of Nikiu), who is called a vicegerent in the *Nominalia of the Bulgarian khans*, is associated with Mokhodo Heu (the ruler of the westernmost region of the khaganate), who, while participating in the strifes in the khaganate in 630–631 with the support of Dulu, managed to kill the khagan Tun-Shehu (Ton Yabghu Khagan, 618–630) himself. After ascending the throne, Mokhodo Heu was killed. The Bulgar ruler Kubrat was his nephew.[147] Without going into detail, I shall simply note that this theory is too far-fetched and is not based on information derived from sources. It is important to emphasize that Dulu and Nushibi are tribal confederations and not ruling dynasties.

P. Golden also assumes that the Khazar khagan dynasty belonged to the Ashina clan, but follows a slightly different logic. Since *khagan* is a title, which is bestowed by divine grace, only one charismatic family had the right to it. Therefore, the legitimacy of the title in the different states is part of the genealogical link between their respective dynasties and this particular family. The Turks themselves used this title only for the rulers of China and Tibet. Thus, the emergence of the *khagan* title among the Khazars should be evidence of the presence of a member of the Turkic ruling dynasty Ashina.[148] This is why P. Golden, while agreeing with the controversial interpretation of Ansa,

146 Zakhoder 1962, 189.

147 Artamonov 1962, 161–162 and 170–171; Gumilev 2004a, 225–227 and 266.

148 Golden 1980, 41 and 220; see also Golden 2003, no. 1, 57–58.

mentioned in *Hudud al-ʿAlam* (another possibility is Isha-Ishad-Shad), accepts its identification with Ashina. For the same reasons he also agrees with the hypothesis about Dulu and Nushibi, as well as with Organa's identification with Mokhodo Heu.[149]

The steppe world during the Early Middle Ages, however, offers quite a few exceptions, which show that the principle of legitimacy is no a sufficient reason for upholding the theory of the Khazar rulers belonging to the Ashina clan. First of all there are the Avars, whose ruling dynasty should not have anything in common with the Turkic rulers. P. Golden mentions them as one of the four "Altaic" peoples who had khagans (together with the Turks, Khazars and Bulgars,[150] although there is no documented evidence depicting the Bulgars as ever having or seeking such a title).[151] In the late seventh century and the early eighth, the Turgesh acquired the right to a khaganate, displacing the Ashina clan. At the same time, the Uyghurs managed to establish the *khagan* title for their own ruling family, Yaghlakar. Of special interest is the fact that the Uyghur subjects, the Karluks, whose ruling dynasty stemmed from Ashina at least according to the aforementioned account of Al-Masudi, used the *yabghu* title for their own rulers until the collapse of the Uyghur Khaganate in 840.[152]

According to P. Golden, the Karluks are an example of an ethnic group that participated (along with the Uyghurs) in the destruction of the last remnants of the Western Turks and for a long time did not dare to accept the *khagan* title for its own dynasty.[153] If this title was really associated with the Ashina clan, in this case clan affiliation was not key for its acceptance. According to the principle of legitimacy, after the destruction of the Turkic Khaganate the *khagan* title should have gone to the dynasty of the Basmils who were the successors of Ashina, and not to the Uyghurs or even the Karluks. By the end of the ninth and the beginning of the tenth century, the *khagan* title was also adopted by the ruler of the Kimeks (who was first Shad Tutuk and then Yabghu after 840).[154]

Assuming that "the sacralization of the early state invariably contains a cultural theory about legitimacy" which is supported by creation myths,[155] the legitimacy in Khazaria during the time of Joseph was deduced through

149 Golden 1980, 44, 207, and 219–220.

150 Golden 1980, 41.

151 On this issue, see Stepanov 2000, 198–203 and 2005b, 263–279.

152 Kliashtornyi 1964, 139; Kliashtornyi and Sultanov 2000, 99–100 and 105–106; Khazanov 1994, 259–260.

153 Golden 1980, 41.

154 Kliashtornyi and Sultanov 2000, 119 and 125; Kumekov 1972, 113–116.

155 See Cohen 1988, 6–8.

the link to Togarmah. As stated earlier, the notion of the primogenitor (Noah, Fereydun, Targitaus) suggests the existence of several descendants who establish the royal dynasties in the various tribes. If the Khazar rulers validated their legitimacy through Togarmah, then the link to Ashina was not necessary, since the ruling clan was also a descendant and not equivalent to Targitaus or Fereydun. This implies the existence of more than one royal family with a common ancestor and thus makes it possible for the Khazar ruler to be not necessarily a descendant of the Ashina clan, but of the common forefather.

T. Noonan regards the interpretation of Ansa as Ashina as true and believes that the Ashina clan origin is part of the imperial ideology of the Khazar dynasty.[156] According to V. Petrukhin, the idea that the Khazar dynasty belonged to the Ashina clan is "obvious".[157] This obviousness, in my opinion, remains unclear.

A. Novosel'tsev is of a somewhat different opinion. He does not agree with the identification of Ansa with Ashina and, like D. Dunlop, believes Ansa to mean the *shad* title.[158] Thus, he rejects one of the main arguments of the proponents of the theory about the link between the Khazar ruling dynasty and the Ashina clan. At the same time, A. Novosel'tsev assumes that in the first half of the seventh century Khazaria was a semi-independent state, the rulers of which bore the title *yabghu khagan*. They continued to be nominally considered subjects of the Turkic khagans due to their kinship with the latter, namely the Ashina dynasty. The Khazar yabghu khagan took on the *khagan* title in the 630s, after the death of his relative, the Turkic khagan Tun-Shehu (Ton Yabghu Khagan).[159] This theory cannot be accepted, since the mentioned yabghu khagan was the ruler of the Western Turkic Khaganate and not Khazaria, which was a part of it. It should also be borne in mind that the *yabghu* title is not found in sources on the Khazars and was not among the titles used in the Khazar Khaganate.[160]

O. Pritsak expresses a similar opinion. He believes that the vicegerent of the Turkic Khaganate in Khazaria, also a member of the Ashina dynasty, bore the *yabghu* title. He declared himself an independent khagan in the mid-seventh century.[161] The sources do not back up this theory. Not surprisingly, C. Zuckerman states that "the connection between Ashina and the

156 Noonan 2001, 89.

157 Petrukhin 1995a, 75.

158 Novosel'tsev 1990 134; Dunlop 1967, 160.

159 Novosel'tsev 1990, 87–89.

160 Dunlop 1967, 28–30; Golden 1980, 50–51; Artamonov 1962, 146–150; Zuckerman 2001, 321–322; see also Shapira 2007b, 332–346.

161 Golb and Pritsak 1997, 54.

Khazar dynasty, this old phantom of Khazarology, is losing its last claims to authenticity".[162]

Since the sources relating to the seventh century do not mention any inadequacies in the authority of the Khazar khagan, M. Artamonov assumes that the Khazar dual kingship is a result of the Judaization of the Khazar nobility. The khagan and pekh (bek) of Khazaria from the 830s, mentioned by Constantine Porphyrogenitus and the Continuator of Theophanes, along with a vague account regarding the sister of the Khazar king, made by Al-Masudi and probably referring to the early ninth century, lead him to believe that the dual kingship arose in Khazaria in the first half of the ninth century. It was then that the figure of the bek emerged alongside the khagan, gradually gaining more power, while the khagan himself merely became an honorary figure. According to M. Artamonov, Judaism was adopted as an official religion in Khazaria (by the rulers and a part of the nobility) during the time of Obadiah in the early ninth century, as is stated in Al-Masudi's account. Bulan, who, judging from the *Khazar Correspondence*, was the first ruler of Khazaria (king or khagan) to convert to Judaism around 730–740, was just the first Khazar "prince" that turned to this faith. M. Artamonov presumes that his descendants were the beks that forced the khagan to become a state symbol with religious rather than political significance. This happened after the reforms of Obadiah (a descendant of Bulan), who forced the khagan to convert to Judaism, which led to a civil war in Khazaria. M. Artamonov bases his assumptions on Constantine Porphyrogenitus' account of the Kabar rebellion.[163] In O. Pritsak's opinion, after the unsuccessful uprising of the Kabars the khagan was left only with sacral functions.[164]

P. Golden, who also assumes that the khagan became a purely ceremonial figure in the ninth century, criticizes at length M. Artamonov's views on the role of Obadiah and the civil war caused by his actions.[165] O. Bubenok, V. Mikheev and A. Tortika all oppose the connection between the Kabar rebellion and the

162 Zuckerman 2001, 315.

163 Artamonov 1962, 275–282 and 324–325; see also Constantine Porphyrogenitus. *De Administrando Imperio*, ch. 39, in Litavrin and Novosel'tsev 1989, 163.

164 Golb and Pritsak 1997, 158.

165 Golden 1980, 98, 100, and 133–136; see also Golden's criticism on the theory that the Khazar dual kingship was a result of the Judaization in Golden 2007b, 155–157. By asking the question, "why would Jewish "reformers" create a sacral monarchy still laden with pagan elements?" Golden 2007b, 157 assumes that the Judaization may have had relevance for the way in which the khagan presented himself to the Jewish public and the Islamic-Christian world.

Judaization of Khazaria.[166] According to M. Artamonov, the destruction of the Tsimliansk hillfort, considered the center of a local ruler, and the subsequent erection of Sarkel—this time as the center of the Khazar dynasty—in its immediate vicinity, can be seen as evidence of the rebellions in Khazaria that followed the Judaization of the khagan.[167] This point of view cannot be accepted either, since it appears that the Tsimliansk hillfort existed for quite a while simultaneously with Sarkel.[168]

According to A. Novosel'tsev, during the first half of the eighth century the Khazar khagan held all the power. After the defeat to the Arabs in 737, his prestige began to fade and by the end of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth century the shad had come to the forefront. He introduced Judaism as a state religion and adopted the *bek* title, ousting the khagan and becoming the effective ruler of Khazaria by the second half of the ninth century. By the second quarter of the tenth century, the diarchy had turned into a monocracy and the khagan was "a prisoner, sacrificed to the people in years of disasters". In other words, in Khazaria the period of diarchy lasted from the end of the eighth century until the first quarter of the tenth century.[169]

S. Pletneva is of a somewhat different opinion. According to her, the sacralization of the power and person of the khagan is the main reason for the Khazar dual kingship. The situation, known from sources to stem from the tenth century, could therefore also be referred to the seventh to eighth centuries, since "it seems only logical to assume that the archaic customs that were known in the tenth century had naturally existed before that time as well".[170] The *Khazar Correspondence* (and the mentioned "chief prince" that khagan Bulan addresses) gives grounds for the assumption that already during the first half of the eighth century a co-ruler existed alongside the khagan, and he was the one that held the actual power.[171]

Further on and somewhat unexpectedly, S. Pletneva develops her idea regarding the ethnic interpretation of the dual kingship. She explains that since only a member of the Ashina clan could become a khagan, the dual kingship system served the interests of the conquered Bulgar nobility. The prestige of the khagan's power faded significantly during the wars with the Arabs

166 Bubenok 2004, 28–29; Mikheev and Tortika 2005, 179–180. According to Tortika and Mikheev 2004, 115, the Khazar dual kingship is a legacy from the steppe tradition.

167 Artamonov 1962, 317–325.

168 Pletneva 1993, 48–69; see also Flerov 1991, 1996a, and 2002, 153.

169 Novosel'tsev 1990, 138–142.

170 Pletneva 1976, 32.

171 Pletneva 1976, 32–33.

from the first half of the eighth century. It was then that the co-ruler of the khagan emerged from the circle of the most active and wealthy Don Bulgar "khans" (whose lands were unaffected by the wars). Thus, instead of rejecting the khagan's power, the Bulgars appropriated it, completely "tabooing" his persona.[172] Of course, this hypothesis regarding the role of Bulgars in the establishment of the dual kingship institution is not based on any evidence. But more importantly, S. Pletneva associates the dual kingship with the pagan tradition that preceded the Judaization. Moreover, she assumes that the Judaization and the reforms that Khagan Obadiah implemented in the early ninth century were aimed at weakening the pagan sacralization and thus allowing the Khazar khagans to fight for the right to rule their country. This is why Khagan Joseph wrote that Obadiah "reorganized the kingdom".[173] In other words, according to S. Pletneva the Khazar dual kingship is a legacy from Khazaria's pagan period and the Judaization furthered the gradual transition to monocracy, though not towards a king (bek), but towards a khagan.

D. Shapira assumes that the Khazar dual kingship was associated with steppe (Turkic) traditions, but that the Judaization helped increase the bek's influence at the expense of the Khazar khagan. Gradually, the Khazar government system grew similar to that of the Japanese shogunate.[174] According to the scholar, "while their theory of royalty was Türkic and entrenched in the ancient traditions of the steppe, the Khazar view of the status of their Judaism in the surrounding geopolitical circumstances was basically Islamic [...] their Judaism signified for the Khazars their Imperial status: not merely indipendence from both the Caesar and the Khalifa, not a "neutral" religion, but the Third Force, the First Faith, whose legitimacy is accepted by other rival parties. Their Judaism thus was not an abberation, but an integral and important layer of their political self-awareness".[175]

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172 Pletneva 1976, 57. Magomedov 1994, 51 reasons in a similar manner. According to him, the Khazar dual kingship arose after the Khazars took Barsilia and the beks came from the family of the former Barsilian rulers. Vernadskii 1997, 230 considers it possible that the dual kingship was a result of the diverse ethnic composition of the state. The khagan "accepted from time to time the help of another ruler, a representative of a different ethnic group that was influential in one period or another. Gradually this power arrangement became permanent".

173 Pletneva 1976, 61–62.

174 Shapira 2005a, 503–505 and 507.

175 Shapira 2005a, 505. See also Vachkova 2003. According to Vachkova 2003, 208, "while national identity in Islam and Christianity is blurred by the universality of their preaching, the Khazars had the opportunity to see themselves as a "chosen people" without losing and actually managing to accentuate their ethnic identity".

The common view is that during the ninth century and especially during the tenth century, Khazaria went through a transition from diarchy to monocracy. This unanimity seems strange, since the only accounts depicting the Khazar khagan in the role of a sacral ruler without any actual power (or those that deal with the Khazar diarchy) stem from the tenth century. But to what extend do the Arabo-Persian authors convey the actual situation in Khazaria? It is possible that the accounts of the Khazar dual kingship reflect not the Khazar nobility's notions of power, but those of the population that it ruled. The influence of Judaism, as we shall see later on, can be traced not only towards the gradual establishment of a monocracy (regardless of whether it was the khagan or his vicegerent that got deprived of power). It is worth wondering how the khagan was perceived in view of the Judaic understanding of kingship. A diarchy such as the Khazar one, with a clear distinction between the authority of the military-administrative and religious powers, could be associated with the issue of the royal and priestly powers. The question, then, is how the Judaic and pagan notions of power merged and what outcome did their interaction lead to. Of importance is not only the time when the Khazar nobility converted to Judaism, but also whether the institution of the co-ruling king had previously existed in some form in Khazaria. In other words, the solution to the problem of the role and influence of Judaism on the establishment of the ruling institution in Khazaria is whether a king figure existed—during the Judaization or before it—alongside the khagan.

The time of Khazaria's Judaization has generated an extensive amount of literature but not a commonly accepted view. It is quite impossible to present in detail here all the scientific theories on this matter. Suffice it to say, three periods are examined. The Khazar sources allow for the assumption that in the first half of the seventh century (the 630s and 640s), Judaism was adopted by Bulan who, from his position of a khagan or bek, succeeded in convincing his co-ruler to do the same. Al-Masudi mentions that Judaism was adopted in Khazaria during the time of Harun Al-Rashid (786–809). This account can be linked to the reforms of Obadiah, which are discussed in the *Khazar Correspondence*. It is presumed that Obadiah imposed Rabbinic Judaism in Khazaria. Based on the information gleaned from the *Life of St. Cyril the Philosopher*, which does not permit any conclusions regarding the Judaic faith of the Khazar khagan, C. Zuckerman places the adoption of Judaism directly after 860.[176]

176 Dunlop 1967, 86–91, 102, 116–121, 151, and 170; Artamonov 1962, 266–267, 276–280, and 332–333; Golden 1980, 134 and 2003, no. 3, 134–135; Pritsak 1981b, no. 11, 270–278; Vernadskii 1997, 298; Zuckerman 1995, 238–250; Noonan 2001, 77.

The later works of R. Kovalev are of particular significance for the clarification of the time of Khazaria's official Judaization. A contributing factor is a special series of coins minted in Khazaria in 837/838. They are distinguished by the inscriptions on them. One of them reads: "Moses is the prophet of God" and another: "Ard al-Khazar" ("The Land of the Khazars"), while a third type of coins do not have inscriptions on them, but a tamga instead, a trident. Royal family symbols (tamgas) are found on coins of the rulers of the Turks, Uyghurs, Turgesh and Karluks and are typical for the steppes. The trident is a widely used symbol in Khazaria and is part of the Eurasian Steppe world tradition and especially that of the Sarmatians. On Khazar coins, the trident is placed where Muslim rulers usually wrote the names and titles denoting their power over their lands.[177] According to R. Kovalev, this series of coins is a manifestation of the politico-religious ideology of the Khazar nobility, associated with a Judaic, Khazar and Turkic (steppe) identity.[178] The coins thus support the view of D. Shapira that Judaism in Khazaria, combined with steppe traditions, was an important part of the local (Khazar) political consciousness.

In R. Kovalev's opinion, the reason these coins were minted lies in the change of the politico-religious leadership of the state or of its system. They reflect both Khazaria's Judaization and the seizure of the khagan's political and military functions by the bek (the sacralization of the khagan). The scholar assumes that between 838 and 843 the bek gained full control over the khagan's secular affairs. He bases his assumption on a letter by the Abbasid Caliph Al-Wathiq (842–847) from 843, which is addressed not to the khagan, but the bek (actually, to the "Tarkhan, king of the Khazars").[179]

The prevailing view in science is that the *bek* title refers to the khagan's vicegerent in Khazaria during the tenth century. Prior to this, his title had been *shad*. This theory is based on the chronicle of Ibn Rustah on the Khazar dual kingship from the early tenth century. There, the *shad* (Isha) title is used instead of *bek*, well known from later sources. It is presumed that the Arab author was depicting an earlier period in Khazaria's history. For reasons unknown, the

177 Kovalev 2005a.

178 Kovalev 2005a, 230.

179 Kovalev 2005a, 231. Without accepting the link between Khazaria's Judaization and the establishment of the dual kingship, Golden 2007b, 156–162 agrees that the coins indicate the time of the Judaization of the Khazar ruling elite. The scholar believes that Khazaria's Judaization occurred in stages and by 861 (the year of St. Cyril the Philosopher's mission to Khazaria) "the Qağan may have still been willing to entertain other religious systems or at least appear to do so". According to P. Golden, Judaism became more widespread by the end of the ninth and the beginning of the tenth century.

Khazar shad changed his title. The account of Constantine Porphyrogenitus that mentions the khagan and pekh of Khazaria from the 830s is used to determine the time this change occurred—at the end of the eighth or the beginning of the ninth century.[180]

There is a certain discrepancy regarding the evolution of the *shad* title towards *bek*. In the steppe states of the Early Middle Ages, the shads had to be "princes by blood", i.e. they belonged to the khagan dynasties. Thus, the customary transition was from *shad*, as well as from *yabghu*, to *khagan*. In other words, the *shad* title was of much higher rank than that of the *bek*, and in the case of Khazaria there is no reason to believe that the vicegerent and the khagan belonged to the same family.[181]

According to P. Golden, the reasons for the transition from *shad* to *bek* are unclear.[182] Ts. Stepanov believes that "the military commander of the Khazars pointedly changed his title from *shad* to the neutral, but polysemantic (and perhaps due to that quite convenient) *beg/bak* that stemmed from the Iranian *bhaga*, originally meaning "God", "distributor of goods/riches; wealthy", which subsequently transformed into "lord, master, governor" [...] this change is symptomatic in light of the drastically diminished military activity of the khagan during this period [...] The new position of the bek in the khaganate allowed for his gradual transformation into an actual king, his power becoming hereditary, as evidenced by Joseph's Reply".[183]

M. Artamonov stresses that only Ibn Rustah uses the title *shad* (Isha) in reference to the khagan's vicegerent. He accentuates on the affiliation of the shads to the khagan dynasties in the steppe world, concluding that a title with such a meaning was unknown among the Khazars. The scholar considers the title an anachronism that was unrelated to the state system of Khazaria. The title of the Khazar khagan's vicegerent was *bek*. Alternatively, a transition from shad to bek did not take place.[184]

Indeed, the account of Ibn Rustah stands alone, since in the first half of the eleventh century Gardizi simply repeats it (although his version of the title is Ishad/Abshad, not Isha) and the interpretation of Ansa, mentioned in *Hudud*

180 Dunlop 1967, 104–109; Zakhoder 1962, 204–206; Golden 1980, 99–100; Novosel'tsev 1990, 137–140; Stepanov 2003a, 220.

181 Golden 1980, 41, 99, and 163; Masao 1981, 53.

182 Golden 1980, 99.

183 Stepanov 2003a, 220–221; on the interpretation of the *beg/bak* title, see also Novosel'tsev 1990, 140, according to whom the reference to this title for the period between the ninth and the tenth centuries is one of the oldest regarding the "Turkic-speaking world".

184 Artamonov 1962, 280–281.

al-ʿAlam, as Isha (Shad) is as unlikely as interpreting it as Ashina.[185] And yet, assuming that the *shad* title did not exist in Khazaria, could it be possible that during the whole period of the Khazar dual kingship the vicegerent bore the *bek* title? Sources from different traditions and with different origins mention a person with the *tarkhan* title as the king of the Khazars. In *Hudud al-ʿAlam* it is the tarkhan-khagan who is a descendant of Ansa.[186]

People bearing the title of *tarkhan* and in one way or another connected to Khazaria and the Khazars come up in sources from the period between the seventh and the first half of the ninth centuries. In 630, the Khazar (possibly) military commander Chorpan Tarkhan was sent by the Turkic khagan to Armenia. Avchi Tarkhan is mentioned in 683 among the subjects of Alp Ilitver, ruler of the "Kingdom of the Huns" in Dagestan and a vassal to the Khazar khagan. Alp Tarkhan was a Khazar military commander whose army joined forces with the Khazar khagan in 716. In 737, during the campaign of Marwan, turned devastating for Khazaria, a forty thousand-strong selected army ("sons of tarkhans"), led by Khazar Tarkhan, faced the Arabs in the Volga Region. He was killed and his forces were defeated. It is after this defeat that the khagan was forced to sue for peace and convert to Islam. In 758, a Khazar princess and daughter of the khagan, accompanied by tarkhans, married the Abbasid governor of Armenia. The *Life of St. Stephen of Sourozh* (the eighth century) mentions Tarkhan George.[187]

All these accounts depict the tarkhans in Khazaria during the eighth century outside the context of the kingly title. In Khazaria, the tarkhans were part of the high nobility. They were military commanders, of elite and selected forces at that, but they also made up the entourage of a Khazar princess. The inscription of Mojilian (Bilge) Khagan (684–734), ruler of the Second Turkic Khaganate, provides an interesting parallel with regard to the tarkhans' elevated status and their possible connection to the beks. In it, the eastern beks (i.e. those with a higher rank) were ruled by an apa tarkhan and the southern ones—by a tamgan tarkhan and boila baga tarkhan.[188] Given that these tarkhans were part of the "Tolis-Tardush" system, typical for the Turkic khaganates, and that the succession to the throne in the khaganates was linked to the so-called "appanage-rota" system, in which the separate high-ranking positions and vicarages were held by "princes by blood",[189] it would be safe to assume family ties between

185 Golden 1980, 207 and 219–220; Novosel'tsev 1990, 137–138.

186 Zakhoder 1962, 189 and 206; Golden 1980, 219; Novosel'tsev 1990, 134.

187 Golden 1980, 150, 154, 176, and 181; Dunlop 1967, 179 and 252; Artamonov 1962, 219.

188 Iordanov 1996b, 55 and 1997, 91.

189 Iordanov 1996b, 54–55 and 1997, 89.

them and the ruling khagans. This brings the tarkhans from the inscription of Mojilian Khagan closer to the Turkic shads.

Still, if the Judaization of Khazaria was related to the distribution of power and if the Khazar system previously resembled the Turkic one, could the emergence of a vicegerent with the title of *bek* mark the separation of the secular from the spiritual power, since the two could not be in the hands of one family, according to Judaic notions? There is, however, no evidence to back the existence of such a system in Khazaria and the steppe tradition, which is linked to the Iranian one, does not exclude the distribution of functions among the various families (as was the case in Bulgaria).[190] The origin of the *shad* title (Ishad/Ikhshid) stems from Sogd and is typical for the local rulers.[191]

The word *tarkhan* is of Scytho-Sarmatian origin and in ancient times it probably meant "judge, interpreter". Later, it was used in steppe states for privileged people that were exempt from taxes. In Bulgaria the tarkhans were of higher rank and held various administrative positions.[192] Based on the etymology of the word *tarkhan*, "judge", Ts. Stepanov assumes that in ancient times the tarkhan "was a senior in the assembly who judged and gave final verdicts on disputes and other special cases".[193] This correspondence to the bek in Khazaria is interesting. According to Al-Istakhri, the king (bek) had seven judges (different for the different religions) and validated their decisions.[194] In the steppe world, the tarkhans usually did not stem from the ruling dynasty and were not called kings. This way, the problem regarding the tarkhans in Khazaria resembles that of the beks. There is, however, one significant exception. The Arab scholar Al-Yaqubi (who worked in 891–892) called the ruler of Khorasan (Sogd) "king (malik) Tarkhan". His residence was in Balkh.[195] According to Ibn Khordadbeh (the ninth century), the ruler of Samarkand also bore the title of *tarkhan*. He also noted the lower status of this title among the Turks (it did not belong to rulers). Again Al-Yaqubi called the ruler of Samarkand "Ikhshid" (i.e. shad).[196] Most likely, the titles of *tarkhan* and *shad* were used interchangeably in Middle Asia in the ninth and tenth centuries.

190 See for instance Stepanov 2002a, 6–12.

191 Golden 2007b, 133 with n. 57; Frye and Litvinsky 1996, 467.

192 Stepanov 1999a, 89–90; Novosel'tsev 1990, 117.

193 Stepanov 1999a, 90.

194 Dunlop 1967, 93; Novosel'tsev 1990, 221.

195 Novosel'tsev 1990, 118.

196 See the text by Ibn Khordadbeh in Velihanova 1986, 69 (on the work of Al-Yaqubi, see Velihanova 1986, 69 with n. 382).

We owe to Al-Yaqubi one of the accounts about a Khazar king with the title of *tarkhan*. In 758–759, Ras Tarkhan, who was king (malik) of the Khazars, invaded Armenia. The Armenian historian Levond (the second half of the eighth century) provides a similar account, although according to it the invasion took place in 764 and the title in question is given as "Raj Tarkhan", a military commander and a descendant of Hatirlitber (probably the title *elteber*). Al-Tabari mentions the same attack (of 764–765), led by "As Tarkhan" who was a Khwarezmian.[197] Despite the year differences, the accounts are most likely referring to the same person or to a person, bearing the same title. Only Al-Yaqubi notes that he was a Khazar king.

According to most interpretations, which are based on the first half of the title (Ras-As), the As Tarkhan was the tarkhan of the Ases-Alans or of the Larisiyah—"al-Arsiyah" (the mercenaries of the Khazar king during the tenth century who stemmed from Khwarezm), in accordance with the account of Al-Tabari. The first version is rejected by A. Novosel'tsev,[198] and the second one—by M. Artamonov.[199] However, M. Artamonov's argument that the Larisiyah were Muslims and thus could not wage war against coreligionists refers to the tenth century and the situation in the eighth century could have been different. Assuming that the king-tarkhan in Khazaria was a predecessor of the bek, the connection between the As Tarkhan of Al-Tabari and the Larisiyah of the bek is hardly accidental.

Although the theories of S. Tolstov on this topic are too far-reaching, the assumption that Khwarezm and Khazaria had close relations already by the late seventh and the early eighth centuries should not be cast aside. Khwarezm was first conquered by the Arabs in 712, but it fell completely only by the mid-eighth century. In relation to these events, S. Tolstov presumes that a migration of Khwarezmians to Khazaria took place. They brought with them the system of the dual kingship, identical to the Khazar one. In Khwarezm, the title of the secular ruler was *baghpur*. He led his countrymen westward and became the forefather of the subsequent beks.[200] This hypothesis has no foundation in the sources and M. Artamonov rejects it completely.[201]

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197 Dunlop 1967, 180; Artamonov 1962, 244–245; Golden 1980, 151; Novosel'tsev 1990, 119; Bubenok and Radivilov 2004, 12–14.

198 Novosel'tsev 1990, 119.

199 Artamonov 1962, 246.

200 Tolstov 1946, 94–102 and 1948b, 223–226.

201 Artamonov 1962, 283–285. According to Vainberg 1990, 259, the Khazar Larisiyah (Arsiyah) are related to the population of the Kerder culture (after the eighth century) in

Based on the fact that in the sources Ras Tarkhan is called leader or king of the Khazars, O. Bubenok and D. Radivilov assume that *Ras* is an Arabic term meaning "head, chief", so Ras Takhan can be read as "chief tarkhan", which fully complies with the titles "king of the Khazars" or Hatirlitber.[202] Since according to Al-Yaqubi Ras Tarkhan was the king of the Khazars, in M. Artamonov's opinion "it could be assumed that in the Khazar government he held the position immediately below the khagan. He was the commander-in-chief of the Khazar army and the predecessor of the beks who later played a leading role in the Khazar state".[203] For B. Zakhoder, the titles of *khagan-bek* and *tarkhan-khagan* are interchangeable.[204]

Not all sources from the eighth century associate the tarkhans in the Khazar Khaganate with the kingly title. Only two accounts from the ninth century deal with Khazar tarkhans and both depict them as kings of the Khazars. The first one is by Ibn Khordadbeh (the ninth century) who describes the travels of Sallam Al-Tarjuman (842–844). His journey lay through the land of the Filan Shah in the Caucasus. The Filan Shah wrote a letter in support of the travelers to the "Tarkhan, king of the Khazars". The second account is by Al-Muqaddasi (985), according to whom the Caliph Al-Wathiq (842–847), during the early days of his reign, sent the scholar Muhammad ibn Musa Al-Khwarizmi to "Tarkhan, the king of the Khazars".[205] Interestingly enough, Al-Biruni (973–1050) uses the *tarkhan* title regarding the king of the old Khazar capital Samandar, who was subordinate to the khagan.[206]

It can be concluded that the change in the title of the king-vicegerent in Khazaria went not just from *shad* to *bek*, but from shad/tarkhan to bek. The Middle Asian tradition, contemporary to the Khazar Khaganate, also provides evidence for such a conclusion. In it, as was discussed earlier, the titles of *shad* and *tarkhan* were both used for rulers of the same regions. The close relations between the ruling dynasties of Sogd, Khwarezm and the region of ancient

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Khwarezm. As was stated earlier, B. Vainberg believes that the Kerder culture arose as a result of the migration of the Dzhetyasar population.

202 Bubenok and Radivilov 2004, 15. In connection with the interpretation of the term *Ras*, it is interesting to note that the Scythian name of the Volga was Ra. *Hudud al-'Alam* contains a description of the river Ras which is identified as the Ilek River, a tributary to the Ural (Vainberg 1990, 202).

203 Artamonov 1962, 246.

204 Zakhoder 1962, 224–225.

205 Dunlop 1967, 190–191 believes that the second account is not authentic, while according to Artamonov 1962, 306 the two accounts refer to the same event.

206 Novosel'tsev 1990, 118.

Kangju should also be noted. The tamga-like signs on the coins of the rulers can be seen as further evidence. On this basis, B. Vainberg distinguishes a particular Yuezhi group (the Yuezhi from the House of Zhaowu) that remained in Middle Asia (unlike the others that continued on southwards and established the Kushan Empire) and founded the royal dynasties of Sogd and Khwarezm. Marital relations between the rulers of Kangju and Sogd that became traditional from the first century AD onward were maintained also during the seventh to eighth centuries. This is also evidenced by the appearance of the trident (!) on coins in Sogd (according to B. Vainberg, the trident originated from Kangju). The trident began appearing on coins from Khwarezm by the end of the third century AD.[207] Precisely this symbol is depicted on one of the aforementioned versions of the special Khazar coin emission from 837/838.

The inscription by Kul Tigin gives an interesting example with regard to the bek's status in Khazaria. In it the chieftain of the tribe (?) Az (cf. with the As Tarkhan in Khazaria) Bars-bek received the title of *khagan* after marrying the sister of Bilge Khagan.[208] The possibility of such a relation between the family of the vicegerent-bek in Khazaria and that of the khagan shall be discussed in more detail later on in the book.

1.4 Mythological Notions and Political Reality in Khazaria during the Tenth Century

An image on a Khazar (Saltovo) silver vessel (from the eighth to ninth century) from the Kotskii Township (on the lower reaches of the Ob River) depicts a fight between two dismounted horsemen. According to V. Petrukhin, it represents the notion of the royal power struggle in the Iranian pictorial and epic tradition. He agrees with N. Foniakova,[209] who identifies one of the horsemen with the Khazar khagan. Thus, the notion of the khagan as a sacral king merges with the Frazerian theme of the battle between the king and his rival to the throne. The youthfulness of one of the horsemen is also a part of this theme, as old age was among the main reasons for the sacral king's killing. The same

207 Vainberg 1990, 251–252, 274, and 277.

208 Golden 2003, no. 6, 88; of special interest with regard to the status of the tarkhan among the Oghuz is the account of Ibn Fadlan, according to which a person named Tarkhan was perceived as the most noble and revered among them (Ibn Fadlan. *Puteshestvie do Volzhska Bulgariia*, in Naumov 1992, 32–33; Kovalevskii 1956, 26 and 129).

209 See Foniakova 2003, 45–48.

motif can be found in Al-Masudi's account of the killing of the Khazar khagan during disaster periods, considered a result of his infirmity (old age).[210]

In V. Petrukhin's opinion the theme of the ritual murder of the sacral king that exists in most traditions refers to the mythological period of the culture heroes and is thus not a part of the social or ritual practices The scientist doubts the possibility that the Khazar king could follow such a "barbaric" custom until the tenth century and assumes that the image refers to folkloric subject matter, incompatible with Judaism.[211] According to him, Ibn Fadlan's account of the Rus' diarchy, similar to the Khazar one, is meant for an outside observer. The information in it does not reflect the reality in Khazaria or in Kievan Rus'.[212]

Nevertheless, V. Petrukhin believes that "the dual kingship tradition among the Khazars alone can be related to the ancient social practices; it could have been reflected in the mythopoetic motif of the sacral king's killing that was conveyed to Al-Masudi by Khazar informators".[213] Comparing the accounts of Al-Istakhri and Ibn Hawqal regarding the enthronization custom (the ritual near-strangulation of the would-be ruler) with the same custom practiced by the Turks, V. Petrukhin associates the Khazar dual kingship with the Turkic tradition. He also finds similarities with the initiation of the Turkic shamans. "The shaman, in his role as mediator between the people (or family) and the celestial spirits and the khagan who incorporated the cosmic connection between the Earth (the state, the people) and the Sky (the gods, Tengri), were both connected to another world (as if transported to the outer world at the time of their initiation-enthronization) [...] As a result of this tradition, the "sacral king" could only be a nominal ruler whose immobility (by his permanent stay at the residence, etc.) ensured the stability of the social and cosmic order, personified by him".[214]

According to M. Artamonov, the "devotion" shown to the Khazar khagans "was used by the Khazar king as an instrument to subject to his power not only the common people, but also the other princes in Khazaria and the neighboring tribes. This forced him to tolerate the descendant of the ancient

210 Petrukhin 1995a, 183–185 and 2000b, 6–8; see also the different possible interpretations of the scene, depicted on the silver vessel, in: Darkevich 1976, 167–169. V. Darkevich perceives the depicted scene as a competition between a groom and a bride. This theory does not seem convincing to Petrukhin 2000b, 6–7; Minaeva 2003b, 49–53; see also Flerova 2001a, 100, a similar image can be found on a clasp from Ordos, dated third century BC (Flerova 2001a, 112); Foniakova 2007, 32–37.

211 Petrukhin 1995a, 186; Petrukhin 2001, 73–74; Petrukhin 2000b, 7–8.

212 Petrukhin 2005, 75–76 and 2001, 73–74.

213 Petrukhin 1995a, 186 and 2000b, 7.

214 Petrukhin 2001, 75–76.

dynasty by his side, but also to show him great respect. In the eyes of the people, the khagans bore the hereditary halo of divine powers, inherent to their ancestors [...] the same powers that the ignorant masses saw as a guarantee for their own prosperity. Judaism not only did not hinder the growth of these ideas, but actually sanctified them by analogy with the ancient Jewish judges".[215]

This statement raises a few questions. Firstly, was sacral regicide indeed not practiced during the examined period? Could it be defined as a ritual, associated solely with mythological concepts? And if not, could Judaism have put an end to this practice in Khazaria? What was the approach of Judaism towards the dual kingship tradition, given that its influence in Khazaria was probably limited? And could the Khazar nobility have been aware of the population's need for a sacral ruler, a need that could have required a sacral regicide? Moreover, we have no reason to postulate that the nobility adhered strictly to the tenets of its professed religion.[216] And last but not least, how do the concurrent (i.e. from the ninth to tenth centuries) accounts of the Magyar and the Rus' dual kingship relate to the Khazar one?

The image on the silver vessel from Kotskii shows that even if ritual regicide was not practiced in Khazaria, the notion of it nevertheless existed among the Khazar population's beliefs. Sacral regicide, along with some elements of the dual kingship, was also practiced in Danube Bulgaria during the eighth and ninth centuries.[217] While there are quite a few differences between the Bulgarian and the Khazar state models and Bulgaria did not reach a government form similar to the Khazar dual kingship, the Bulgarian tradition is still extremely important with regard to the development of the notions of power in Khazaria. It is "a deeply rooted, traditional practice [...] the source of which goes well back in time and is largely associated with some incomplete notions of the magical nature of kingship".[218] The proximity between the Bulgars and the Khazars turns the Khazar example into a valid argument in support of the theory that sacral regicide was, in fact, practiced in Bulgaria,[219] but the opposite might also be true—that the Bulgarian example can be seen as evidence of the existence of this custom in Khazaria. Contrary to V. Petrukhin's opinion,

215 Artamonov 1962, 411.

216 In Dunlop's opinion, the Khazar Judaism was quite deficient and superficial even in the tenth century (Dunlop 1967, 143, 195, and 221).

217 Beshevliev 1939, 22–27 and 2008, 311–313; Stepanov 1999a, 85 and 142–143; Stepanov 2000, 183–184; Stepanov 2003a, 222; Stanilov 2003b, 11–12; see also Giuzelev 2007.

218 Stepanov 1999a, 143.

219 Stepanov 1999a; Minaeva 2003b, 53, while not accepting the interpretation of V. Petrukhin and N. Foniakova of the image depicted on the silver vessel from Kotskii as the only possible one, nevertheless admits that the "the scene on the vessel from Kotskii could be used for the reconstruction of the (Proto-)Bulgarian mythopoetic model".

sacral regicide was not a surprising occurrence in the Early Middle Ages. If this tradition was abandoned in Bulgaria after the conversion to Christianity (done on a large scale and as a part of the state policy), can the same be said about Khazaria and its Judaization, which was not only limited in scope, but also incomplete? Did the observance of such a custom depend on the views of the nobility, which was susceptible to external influences, or on the beliefs of the population whose support (or faith in the sacral powers of the ruler) was vital for the state?

In this sense, Al-Masudi's account of the sacral regicide in Khazaria is of importance. According to him, in times of hunger, war or any other unexpected disaster, the nobles along with the "common" people went to the king and demanded the death of the khagan. The king could agree with them or he could defend the khagan if he thought that the latter had not committed a crime or sin that deserved such a punishment.[220] I do not see a reason to doubt Al-Masudi's words. They illustrate the interaction between the beliefs of the population and the authority of the bek who had the final say in the decision of whether or not the disasters that plagued the land were caused by the khagan's weakness. This does not mean that the khagan had become a hostage of the bek's will, since, again according to Al-Masudi, the latter's power would be incomplete without the presence of the khagan,[221] and the bek could hardly have been able to constantly replace his suzerain without consequences.

The sources on Bulgaria make sacral regicide, mainly in the wake of military defeats, seem possible; there is also an important account that depicts the killing (strangulation) of the ruler due to blindness. The strangulation is an additional argument for the existence of this custom in the Bulgarian state, since it does not involve spilling of blood, thus preserving the sacral power to pass on to the next ruler.[222] Not coincidentally, the initiatory rite of the khagan includes a near-strangulation precisely at the moment when he determines the duration not only of his reign, but also of his life. This is why hanging (self-hanging) is viewed as "identical to climbing the tree",[223] or the cosmic axis that enables the connection between the world of the humans and the world of

220 Dunlop 1967, 208. An interesting, albeit not entirely accurate, parallel can be found in the ancient Chinese chronicles, according to which "in Corea the blame was laid on the king whenever too much or too little rain fell and the crops did not ripen. Some said that he must be deposed, others that he must be slain" (Frazer 2006, 85).

221 Dunlop 1967, 208.

222 Beshevliev 1939, 26–27; Stepanov 1999a, 142–143.

223 Kaloianov, 2003, 95. Not coincidentally, in Kradin's opinion the would-be ruler of the Huns acquired his sacred qualities after the entronization (Kradin 2001a, 141).

the gods. Through his ability to communicate and to travel between worlds the ruler ensured the well-being of his subjects. This was one of the main functions of the khagan not only in Khazaria, but also in the other khaganates where his powers were not so limited.

Self-hanging is a ritual death which gives the would-be ruler supernatural power. This power is given by Divine grace alone. The times of disasters then indicate that this power has left its chosen one and that he must be ritually sent to God or the gods, since he has already accepted death on his initiation. In this context, of particular interest is the haiduk song from the Preslav region in Bulgaria, in which "the voivode Tatuncho welcomes new champions in his band only after a test by self-hanging". A. Kaloianov believes that "the self-hanging fragment probably corresponds to a shamanic-style initiation of young men into warriors".[224] Regardless of whether such a connection is possible or not, it is clear that the heroes are not mortal any more, i.e. they are no longer of "this" world, having experienced their own ritual death. Could we be seeing a Christianized version of the same custom in the memorial service from 1903, held for the voivode Radon Todev from Bansko and his whole band before a battle?[225]

According to R. Neikova, "the strangulation of the khan and the departure by hanging are probably rooted in the cosmogonic notions of the three-part vertical division and order of the world, as well as in the belief that the high-situated and worthy people originated from and belonged to the celestial world (seen as "a return to the homeland"/rebirth of khans, leaders, heroes distinguished in battle and even enemies)".[226] She also notes the Bulgarian belief that the celestial world was like the earthly one, with the only difference being that the people there girded themselves around the neck.[227]

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224 Kaloianov 2003, 96. A separate question is whether it can be postulated that a phenomenon, similar to Central Asian shamanism, existed among the Bulgars. For the opposite view, see Neikova 2006. In this case the practice in question is not necessarily connected to shamanism. Also noteworthy are the Bulgarian notions of rusalias, seen as otherworldly creatures. "This also explains their unusual magical powers for healing and bringing fertility and health" (Georgieva 1993, 161). The origins of this custom in Bulgaria remain unclear. It could quite possibly be connected to a Thracian or Roman tradition.

225 See esp. the analysis of Cuisenier 2002, 82–93, as well as the Song for Radon Todev. In the last verse of the song Radon Todev rises from the dead. He comes out of the grave, takes his rebel cap, rifle and sabre and begins to roam the mountain alone, in search of his uncle Blago. The song shows how the image of Radon Todev has merged with older mythological motifs.

226 Neikova 2006, 149.

227 Neikova 2006, 149; see Marinov 2003, 65; Georgieva 1993, 18.

Among the reasons why the Bulgarian prince Boris (852–889) decided to convert to Christianity, cited by Byzantine authors, are hunger (natural disasters) and several military defeats. The rebellion against him was caused by "the bad law" he gave.[228] "Gave bad law" is a formula that justifies sacral regicide.[229] Laws are given to the chosen one by God's will and a bad law shows the inability of the ruler to maintain the connection to the Upper World. He has lost his supernatural power, which is crucial for the well-being of the whole society. Bad law is equivalent to disasters or to unsuccessful wars, which are also proof of the ruler's weakness.

Quite a few steppe peoples saw the khagan as a law-maker.[230] In this context, of particular interest is the account of the Turkic Bilge Khagan about the wise khagans who ruled the First Turkic Khaganate and laid down the law, leading the country to prosperity. But then came some foolish khagans and ruined the country. Thus, wisdom is a quality that according to the Turks was bestowed upon the khagans by Tengri. Also noteworthy is the belief that by "speaking" to the khagan, Tengri settled state and military affairs.[231] In other words, without a sacral ruler the state cannot survive.

Sacral regicide ensures the continuity and legitimacy of the royal power, but also transfers the ability for contacting the Upper World. This ability is crucial for the fertility and rebirth of nature each year. The sacral king can be seen as an incarnation of the deity that this process depends on.[232] His supernatural power is not bestowed upon him indefinitely. It can be lost due to advancing age or some other reason. In such a case he must be replaced by a young and potent (including sexually) ruler. In Khazaria such a power could not be taken from just anyone, but only from the chosen one who was a member of the ruling family. When the throne was usurped, the "chosenness" had to be proven, with the proof being the prosperity of the population.

According to mythological thinking, sacral kings are incarnations of deities who are eternally dying and being reborn.[233] In the myth of Dionysus,

228 See Bozhilov 1995a, 78–79; Giuzelev 1969, 103 and 108.

229 Kaloianov 2003, 104.

230 Golden 1980, 101 with n. 316.

231 Kliashtornyi 1964, 61 and 1984, 19; Kliashtornyi and Sultanov 2000, 158. After ascending the throne, the Hunnic Modun Chanyu waged several wars of conquest. When peace and tranquillity were established across all borders (except the southern one with China), "all the nobles and dignitaries of the Xiongnu (the Huns—*Author's note*) bowed before him and began to perceive Modun Chanyu as a wise man", i.e. they accepted him as their ruler (Kradin 2001a, 61).

232 Frazer 2006, 169.

233 Basilov 1998, 258; see Frazer 2006, 304ff.

the Thracian king Lycurgus crossed Dionysus, for which the latter drove him insane (took away his wisdom), and as a result Thrace was plagued by drought. According to the prophecy of an oracle, probably connected to the sanctuary of Dionysus upon Mount Pangaeus, the fertility of the land could be restored only after the death of the king.[234] Examining the ideas, incorporated in the myths of Orpheus, Rhesus and Zalmoxis, A. Fol assumes that "these three personifications appear to be the transmitters of the premonitions of the Son (of the Great Goddess, such as Dionysus—*Author's note*), both in his hypostasis of the Sun (the Celestial Light) and in the hypostasis of Fire (the Earthly or chthonic energy). Moreover, from a doctrinal point of view these personifications represent the epitome of the institution of the king: to interpret the will of the main god and to rule accordingly, both as an arbiter (political leader) and as a chieftain (military commander). His main function, therefore, requires him to be the high priest, i.e. to perform the one and only regal rite—to depict the death and rebirth of the god in order to maintain the existence of power and the existence of the Universe".[235]

In V. Flerova's opinion, the two rulers of Khazaria were "incarnations of the Cult of Dionysus, divided between two periods and traceable everywhere with regard to the institution of the sacral king and his strictly regulated life and violent death. The division here, however, is manifested not through alternate ruling periods for the khagan and the bek, but by the division of the sacral functions between them. The bek personified the upper, right world, the white principle, the summer season of plant growth, the day and the shining sunlight, burning fire, vital activity and its highest point—war. The khagan on the other hand symbolized the lower, left, dark world that was hidden from the eyes, as well as winter, night and calmness. Usually in mythology it is this state of nature, immersed in a winter or nocturnal sleep that is considered as having utmost importance for the process of fertility. Hence the khagan's responsibility for poor crops during droughts and his harem of 25 wives and 60 concubines".[236]

Some of V. Flerova's statements are probably disputable—such as fire not always being associated with light, whiteness and the sun, but also with darkness, the night and chthonic forces. But in this case the details are not important. The mythological origin of the power division in Khazaria signifies the existence of two principles, personified by the rulers—mirror opposites that simultaneously represented a single entity. The question is whether such a

234 Stoianov 2006b, 47; Fol 1997, 238.

235 Fol 1997, 247.

236 Flerova 2001a, 117.

clear division between the mythical prerogatives of power in Khazaria can be accepted, since prior to the khagan's conversion to Judaism, i.e. during the eighth century and probably a large part of the ninth century as well, his power was not so limited and reflected the pagan beliefs of the population.

To a certain extent, the khagan's power incorporates ideas associated with the chthonic and nocturnal principle, as well as with the celestial and light (diurnal) one. Fertility, while being "prepared" during the night and wintertime, takes place during the summer months, and droughts (the powerful sun) as well as most kinds of wetness (floods and rain) can be "blamed" only on the khagan. The development of diarchy in Khazaria suggests that the khagan had more nocturnal/winter features, which indicate a certain passivity on his side.[237] Like V. Flerova Ts. Stepanov assumes that "from the ninth century onwards, diarchy in Khazaria could also be explained through the interpretation of the cosmological scheme light—dark = spring/summer—fall/winter, that is by cyclical changes in the Universe. Winter and fall—both being the first part of the dual equation—reflect the passivity, while spring and summer are the epitome of activity; the molding in this case is also achieved through the reference to light and darkness, the analogy of which is the opposition Sky/Sun—Saturn. In high antiquity (i.e. even prior to the Metal Ages) the latter was seen as the father of the Sun and consequently, of the Supreme Male Deity. These two celestial bodies incorporate the idea of the male principle in its two dimensions: ruler of the day (sun—warrior—activity—pact—("celestial") gold, etc.) and of the night (all things chthonic—all things magical—wiseman/judge—passivity—("subterranean") gold—fertility, etc.). As in many sophisticated government systems in pre-modern societies and especially in empires, the astral projections and features have most probably shaped both the khagan and the bek after the eighth century: the first one took on the characteristics of the Supreme God, including quite a few chthonic features, while the latter acquired a distinguished solar nature".[238]

The dual (solar-chthonic) nature of the Supreme Deity is comparable to the kingship (khaganship). This does not mean that the Khazar bek "deprived" the supreme power of some of its authority that connected it to the solar principle and to the active, militant one. If the Khazar dual kingship is an ancient tradition, even if not in the form recorded during the tenth century, the celestial divine pairs (Mithra–Varuna or Mithra–Ahura Mazda, "The Wise God") are

237 Stepanov 2003a, 227.

238 Stepanov 2003a, 226.

an example of such a division.[239] Ts. Stepanov assumes that "in the Khazar Khaganate the Indo-Iranian principle in the "kingship concept" remained quite strong also during the ninth and tenth centuries. Or, in other words, the political/military/priestly aspects that were concentrated in the figure of the king according to ancient tradition (the Eurasian "Scythian" one in particular), fell apart in Khazaria during the ninth to tenth centuries, separating into two hypostases; the khagan and the bek thus were the two names and epitomes of the male principle. This is why the Arabic written tradition has preserved the following on these two high-ranking figures: the bek is the one who rules, but he must have the khagan by his side in order to be in/have full power. This would not be surprising given the fact that during the period in question the Khazars had nowhere to borrow a "living" model of the Jewish state from, as well as a kingship notion and rituality, and were thus possibly forced to recycle their own old "royal" matrices, filling them with new meaning".[240]

The divine pairs do not provide a simple solution with regard to the distribution of power in the Khazar dual kingdom. Varuna can be identified with the Khazar khagan because he "punishes by "bondage" (that is, by illness or impotence) anyone who infringes the law", while the tendency to be passive is "manifested by all the supreme gods of Heaven and goes very well with the "magical" prestige of the sovereign gods who "act without action", work directly by the "power of the spirit".[241] Like the Khazar khagans, Varuna is both a lunar and an aquatic deity, associated with the night.[242] It is important to bear in mind, in light of the Khazar dual kingship tradition and the cult of Varuna, that according to M. Eliade, "it is only among Indo-Europeans that the "binding" complex is found organically integrated into the very structure of "terrible" sovereignty, both divine and human".[243]

Actually, more popular in the ancient Indian beliefs is Indra, who personifies the supreme kingship. He is "a demiurge and fecundator, personification of the exuberance of life, of cosmic and biological energies".[244] Indra is first and foremost a king who does not age. A thunderer associated with the forces of nature and especially with wind and rain. He is the embodiment of the ideal

239 According to Pritsak 1981a, 78–80, the perceptions of the celestial pair Mithra–Varuna are reflected in the dual kingship of the steppe khaganates.

240 Stepanov 2003a, 228.

241 Eliade 1998b, 95.

242 Eliade 1998b, 95.

243 Eliade 1998b, 121.

244 Eliade 1997, 250.

king that in the ancient Indian tradition was seen as the giver of rain, responsible for the land's fertility. And according to *Mahabharata*, in a land with no king there is no rain.[245]

The Indo-Iranian Mithra is no less controversial. Mithra is associated with the sun and daylight; he is the god of war and fertility. One of his images is the bull (it is also the image of Indra)—a symbol of all things earthly, regal and chthonic. He shares power over the world with the Supreme God (Ahura Mazda–Varuna) who is also the supreme legislator, but Mithra is the one who oversees contracts and fair dealing.[246]

In view of the perception of the khagan in Khazaria, it should be borne in mind that Afrasiab (the mythological ruler of Turan) was responsible for drought spells and floods, while Siyavush was "the object of the "mourning" cult that incorporated some elements from the cult of the deities of the dying and resurrecting nature".[247] Of particular interest is the legend of Afrasiab who built the Baggar fortress ("the Mountain of God") from iron. Although it was built underground, it was never dark inside it.[248] The name of Siyavush can be translated as "black stallion".[249] In S. Tolstov's opinion, the black horseman (Siyavush) is an incarnation of Ahriman and is part of the subterranean fire cult, and his image is close to that of the Thracian horseman.[250]

Afrasiab and Siyavush are connected with the mythological tradition in an unusual manner. Siyavush stemmed from the first legendary Iranian dynasty (the descendants of Iraj) and was the son of the Kavi Usan (Kay Kavus). His mother was a mysterious maiden, found in the woods near the border with Turan (she was obviously a reincarnation of the Great Goddess), who died after giving birth. To defend his honor Siyavush underwent the ordeal of fire. Later, he attacked Turan and married the daughter of Afrasiab who gave him some land. On it he built the city Kangdiz. In the end, Siyavush became a victim of slander and was killed by men hired by Afrasiab. His death was avenged by his son Kay Khosrow (Kavi Husravah). According to the *Avesta*,

245 Kullanda 1995, 105–113.

246 Eliade 1997, 394; Kuznetsov 1998, 173 and 200; Golan 1993, 225; Kiumon 1999, 13–15; Otran 1998, 49–50; for more details on the bull image, see Minaeva 2002, 18–25.

247 P'iankov 2001, 337–338; on the Dionysian cults in Middle Asia (as well as on Siyavush as the Middle Asian Dionysus), see Darkevich 1976, 74–75 and 109–111. According to Neikova 2006, 98, "the two ideological spheres—the Thracian and the Bulgar one—obviously "interact" and unite in the various types of times and in their perceptions on afterlife (in which "the sent-away one" serves God) as a transition to immortality/and resurrection".

248 Korogly 1983, 113.

249 Korogly 1983, 118.

250 Tolstov 1948b, 85 and 1947b, 44.

he was actually the grandson of Siyavush, born of the marriage of the latter's daughter and Afrasiab's brother, Agrerat. Kay Khosrow is regarded as the founder of the first Khwarezmian dynasty.[251]

Siyavush is also regarded as the founder of the dynasty of the Parthian Arsacids. In addition, he is credited with founding the cities of Samarkand and Bukhara.[252] Of particular interest is the account of Al-Biruni regarding the Parthian dynasty. Before ascending the throne, the ruler withdrew to a cave and his subjects paid him honors as to a newborn. M. Eliade associates this belief with the Armenian legends of Mithra who lived in a cave and came out only once a year. Mithra was incarnated and born again through the new ruler.[253]

The connection between the cave and Khazaria's Judaization, made by the writer of the *Cambridge Document*, Hasdai ibn Shaprut and Jehuda Halevi, is hardly coincidental. According to the *Cambridge Document*, the Books of Moses were retrieved from a cave in the Valley of Tizul (probably in the area of the old Khazar capital Samandar). Their interpretation by Jewish sages proved to be decisive for the khagan's conversion to Judaism. Jehuda Halevi wrote that the king and his vicegerent converted to Judaism in a cave that was situated in the Varsan Mountain (related to Varachan or Barsilia).[254] Apparently, the mountain and the cave are situated in Dagestan and were most probably the site of the ancient pagan sacral center of the Khazars.

The "sacred mountain" is a traditional concept for the steppe peoples. It was the sacral center of the state, equivalent to the tree as a cosmic axis. This mountain contained the cave in which the khagans officiated in their capacity as high priests. They served the ancestor cult and especially that of the dynasty, to all the previous rulers. It is important to bear in mind that rituals were also performed in Madara (the Bulgarian "sacred mountain")—in caves with running

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251 Tolstov 1948b, 83–86; Korogly 1983, 107 and 117–118; P'iankov 2001, 335–338.

252 Kliashtornyi 1964, 168.

253 Eliade 2009, 313.

254 Dunlop 1967, 117–118 and 158; Artamonov 1962, 270 and 272; Golb and Pritzak 1997, 44 and 157; The account of Hasdai ibn Shaprut has a slightly different meaning. He mentions Mount Seir (it could also mean Serir, but such a mountain also exists south of Palestine), where the Jews hid their sacred books. After some time they found them and began to study the Law. According to Artamonov 1962, 271, the cave with the books, which the *Cambridge Document* refers to, reminded Hasdai ibn Shaprut of "the popular Jewish belief that was also known among the Khazar Jews who integrated it in the legend of the Khazar Judaization". M. Artamonov thus links the account of the sacred books with the *Qumran manuscripts*, also found in a cave. According to Golden 2007b, 158, "the complex of mountains, sea and cave" of the *Cambridge Document* mirrors that of other Inner Asian ethnogonic myths".

water (water springs). Already G. Fehér established that the caves of Madara were used as part of the ancestor cult in the religious ritualism of the Bulgars.[255]

Movses Kalankatvatsi mentions a similar cult in the Kingdom of the Huns in Dagestan in the late seventh century.[256] For the Turks, and later for the Uyghurs, the sacred mountain was Otuken, "regarded as the patron spirit of the khagan family".[257] In Turkic beliefs, Otuken was inseparable from the supreme female deity.[258] This notion apparently stems from the time of ancient Turan, when the mountains of Kanha were the religious center of the Turanians and part of the Aredvi Sura Anahita cult.[259] Such continuity is natural, especially given the importance of the scared mountain as a cosmic axis, equivalent to the tree of life, the river and fire (all symbols that connect worlds), all of which represent the Great Goddess on a mythological level.[260] Not coincidentally, according to the Turkic legend the she-wolf gave birth to her ten sons in a mountain cave, and Scythes (the ancestor of the Scythians) was born in a cave after Heracles/Targitaus lay with the Serpent-Legged Goddess.[261] In Dagestan, the cave incorporates the ideas of kingship and of religious teachings. A legend was recorded in the seventeenth century about the mound of Qurhuda (a preacher of Islam), revered in Derbent and situated in a cave where it was guarded by an old woman. The same mound contained the sword of the propagator of Islam, Maslamah. According to Iu. Karpov, these beliefs are remnants

255 Féher 1997 (originally 1939), 45–46. See also Ovcharov 1997, 38–49.

256 Kliashtornyi and Sultanov 2000, 162–163; Kliashtornyi 2000, 123.

257 Stepanov 2005a, 116.

258 Potapov 1973, 283.

259 Vainberg 1990, 203–204.

260 The same symbolic link can be traced by interpreting Bulgarian ideas and monuments in Danube Bulgaria or Khazaria. See Mollov 1997, 33 with n. 12; Vitlianov 1997, 337–353; Georgieva 1993, 42–43; Aksenov 2002, 11–12 and 2004c, 208. These mythological notions are extremely ancient. Examining the common traits in the ideology of "the Island world of the Aegean" and "the landlocked plains of northern India", Campbell 2005, 75 notes "the occurrence in both of a goddess who is both benign (as cow) and terrible (as lioness), associated with the growth, nourishment and death of all beings, and, in particular, Vegetation; symbolized in all her aspects by a cosmic tree of life, which is equally of death; and whose male associate is a god whose animal is the bull and token the trident (!), with whom, furthermore, the waning and waxing of the moon is linked, in a context showing numerous vestiges of a tradition of ritual regicide"(!). In his view, "the two mythologies are clearly extensions of a single system, of which the matrix was the nuclear Near East; the period of diffusion preceded that of the rise of the great Bronze Age Sumero-Egyptian kingly states; and the motive force of the vast expansion was commercial: the exploitation of raw materials, and trade".

261 Kliashtornyi 1964, 104; Raevskii 1977, 21–22.

of the pagan (pre-Muslim) notions of the local population and were part of the mystery plays at times of harvests, droughts or excessive rains. The worship of a sword and a cave points toward the influence of the cult of the Sun-god Mithra, practiced in caves.[262]

The difficulty in clarifying the idea of khaganship also comes from the notion that the cult of the sacral king is a reflection not only of the Supreme God cult, but also of that of the Great Goddess who displays earthly, chthonic and fertility traits, as well as solar traits, present in her image as the Maiden. The relation between the cult of Mithra and the cave and rock (the sky), and with the notion of kingship as well, determines its correlation with the Great Goddess cult both in Iran and during the spread of Mithraism in the West.[263] It should be borne in mind that the ancient Iranians regarded Mithra and Varuna as the sons of the Great Goddess, with the first one representing the sun and fire, the earthly world and the priestly functions, and the latter one embodying water, the night, the other world and the warrior functions.[264] If we swap the places of the priestly and the warrior functions, we would achieve a more or less accurate analogy of the Khazar dual kingship, in view of the theories of V. Flerova and Ts. Stepanov.

Not much clearer is the division of the supreme deities' functions in the *Satapatha Brahmana*: "Mitra is the Counsel, Varuna the Power; Mitra the Priesthood, Varuna Royal Rule; Mitra the Knower, Varuna the Executive".[265]

The Hyperborean myth of Apollo brings us back to ancient beliefs, but to some extent also to the Turkic genealogical legend of the wolfish origin of Ashina (a khagan clan). Apollo was born by Leto transformed as a she-wolf, suggesting his identification with the night sun "in its black wolfish image".[266] "In order to be reborn in his wolfish reincarnation", Apollo the Wolf "must die as the Bull Zagreus".[267] If the Turks are directly connected to the wolf and the she-wolf (probably symbolizing the Mother Goddess), it is permissible to argue that the Oghuz are connected to the bull (*Oghuz* means "bull").[268] In a mythological description Oghuz Khagan is depicted as both bull, wolf, bear

262 Karpov 2001, 63–64.

263 Otran 1998, 50–53 and 107–108; Kiumon 1999, 27, 76–77, and 147–148. See also Stepanov 2007, 44–52.

264 Dudko 2004, 40; Indra is also the son of the Great Goddess (Campbell 2004, 73).

265 Campbell 2005, 274.

266 Fol 1998, 119.

267 Fol 1998, 203.

268 Korogly 1976, 45. The name can also be interpreted in other ways. It can be translated as "the ten arrows" and initially it could have denoted some sort of political organization. For more details, see Golden 2003, no. 5, 45–48.

and sable.[269] Verethragna, the Iranian god of battle and victory, is depicted as a bull, horse, ram, goat, bird of prey and a camel. He is the companion of Mithra, whom he helps in battles in the form of a wild boar.[270]

V. Flerova associates Verethragna with a group of Saltovo amulets in the form of protomes of camels (the camel is one of the sacral symbols of Eastern Iran that depict Verethragna as a deity of victory) and which the Saltovians regarded as interchangeable with water birds.[271] The camel was the symbol of kingship in ancient Kangju and Khwarezm, especially the depictions of winged camels, sometimes with bird heads. In Sogd the camel-bird was the symbol of the Bukhara dynasty. In the frescoes of Panjakent the images of camel-birds are replaced with Simurgh-like creatures.[272] The Simurgh (or dog-bird) also appeared in Danube Bulgaria, in monuments from the tenth century. It was widespread in Middle Asia and in Sassanid Persia (as the royal emblem of the dynasty). It was part of the cult of fertility and of the world tree.[273] The griffon is closely related to this expressive system as well and it was widespread in Khazaria and Danube Bulgaria. It also combines the notions of sovereignty and the cult of fertility.[274] According to V. Flerova, the cult of fertility, personified by the griffon, lies in the basis of the worship of the khagan, the sacral king, killed after a bad crop. She assumes that this semantic field is the place where the symbols of the trident and the griffon meet.[275]

According to ancient (Neolithic) notions, the bull represents the earthly and chthonic male deity, while the Great Goddess, his spouse, is the celestial deity, depicted as a cow. Later, the bull became the symbol of the Supreme Celestial Thunder God, while the Great Goddess began to symbolize the earth and all things chthonic.[276] This "switching of places" is not complete, since in many cultures and especially in the steppe ones the celestial goddess was seen as the wife of the Supreme Deity (one example are Tengri and Umay). The Iranians

269 Korogly 1976, 39 and 45; the first ruler of the Wusuns, Gun-mo, was also raised by a she-wolf (see Kradin 2001a, 157).

270 Kliashtornyi and Sultanov 2000, 29; Flerova 2001a, 52. Verethragna can also be seen as an Iranian replica of Indra (Minaeva 2002, 21).

271 Flerova 2001a, 52. On a mythological level Verethragna depicts the Iranian perception of the ruler as a culture hero, carrier of "sacral grace" and often portrayed as a slayer of various wild beasts or dragons. In Stepanov's opinion, it is possible that the same idea is reflected on the rock relief at Madara (Stepanov 2001, 11).

272 Vainberg 1990, 303; Darkevich 1976, 24.

273 Doncheva-Petkova 1996, 56–58.

274 Flerova 2001a, 79–82; Doncheva-Petkova 1996, 13–47.

275 Flerova 2001a, 82; See also Doncheva-Petkova 1996, 32.

276 Golan 1993, 53–59.

and in a certain sense also the Turks believed in a clearly defined divine celestial triad that consisted of two male deities and a female one (Ahura Mazda, Mithra and Anahita). The celestial goddess is usually the daughter of the earthly goddess or her incarnation as the Maiden-Goddess. It is not clear to what extent the notions of the wolf and the bull overlapped in the minds of the steppe peoples. Most probably, it was a chthonic, earthly connection to the ruling royal family. It differs from the commitment of the khagans to the deity of the Skies and suggests a duality in the notion of their power. Among the Iranian and Turkic peoples the goddess that had an exceptionally strong influence was not so much the earthly one, as the celestial one (Anahita and Umay respectively).

In Thrace, the son of the Great Goddess Dionysus was sacrificed in the form of a bull. Mithra was also sacrificed in this form. And the bull is also one of the animal reincarnations of Indra. According to traditional Turkic notions from the region of the Altai Mountains the deity of the Lower World Erlik is depicted as a bull, which in A. Golan's opinion could be a remnant from some older beliefs, associated with the Neolithic deity of the Underworld. Furthermore, the Sun represented the female principle and was sometimes depicted in a female form by the Turkic people of the Altai Mountains. It should be borne in mind that Erlik was also the first blacksmith, and according to the Altai Turks only the inhabitants of the Lower World had the privilege of power over metal and fire.[277] The she-wolf and the cow are reincarnations of the Great Goddess and their offspring are culture heroes and founders of dynasties. One of the key capabilities of the culture hero is the ability to cross between worlds, perhaps because by birth he belongs to both the Upper, Middle and the Lower World.

Based on the inscriptions of the Bulgar rulers Krum (802–814), Malamir (831–836) and Persian (836–852), some scholars assume that the kavkhan was a co-ruler in the Bulgar state. He stood at the head of the left (the eastern and more prominent) wing of the army and in some cases took on the function of army commander as well, substituting the ruler. The kavkhan also had duties related to construction. His post was not elective and did not depend on the will of the Bulgarian kana, but was rather passed on through kinship.[278] It is

277 L'vova, Oktiabr'skaia, Sagalaev, and Usmanova 1988, 23, 35, and 109–110; the mythological attachment between rulers and blacksmiths is typical for the steppe world (see Stepanov 2005a, 110).

278 Stepanov 1999a, 85; Giuzelev 2007, 70, 88, and 115. During the reign of Kana Malamir, Kavkhan Isbul was definitely presented as co-ruler. It is generally believed that he held this position due to the ruler being a minor. Venedikov 1995b, 139–142 assumes that it is quite possible for Malamir actually to have been of age.

presumed that in Bulgaria, the highest posts (six in number) were hereditary, i.e. they belonged to certain families, which indicates the presence of old Iranian traditions in the Bulgarian government system.[279] The Turkic system was different, since senior positions were distributed among members of the ruling family (such as the *yabghu* and *shad* titles, for example). Since the position of the bek in Khazaria was also hereditary, could the Khazar system have been similar to the Bulgarian one, in terms of family involvement in senior positions?

Interpreting the theory of O. Pritsak, according to whom the left wing of the steppe empires was ruled by and belonged to relatives of the ruler through the female line of descent, V. Giuzelev comes to the conclusion that the kavkhan was the supreme ruler of the so-called "father-in-law" tribes, which, by virtue of tradition, gave him the second-ranked position in the state.[280] T. Zhumaganbetov assumes that the Tengri cult incorporates the male and the female principles, reflected in the concurrent rule by representatives of the khagan (male) and the khatun (female) family. As a symbol of the dual nature of state sovereignty, Tengri and Umay are spouses. The interaction between the two ruling families, represented by the khagan and his khatun, ensured the survival of the state.[281]

Assuming such a hypothesis is valid, is it permissible to argue that the Bulgar rulers took wives only from one family, since the position of the kavkhan was hereditary? In this case, one could look for a parallel among the Khazars, which would bring us back to the ethnic interpretation of the bek's position in the khaganate. According to the *Armenian Geography* from the eighth century, the khatun or the wife of the khagan came from the Barsils,[282] and Barsilia should have occupied the left (eastern) part of Khazaria. Furthermore, also noteworthy is the account (from the ninth century) of a khatun, sister to the Khazar king, who convinced the starving Khazars to submit to God's will.[283] The account implies that the khatun in question had royal prerogatives. D. Dunlop, however, doubts this account's authenticity, stating that there is no evidence to support the idea of Khazar women having played a significant role

279 Stepanov 2002a, 6–9.

280 Giuzelev 2007, 113.

281 Zhumaganbetov 2006, 158.

282 Dunlop 1967, 45; Magomedov 1994, 51; Zuckerman 2001, 329; Tortika 2006a, 211. Of particular interest is also the fact that among the Huns the representatives of families that were exogamous partners of the ruling family held judiciary positions (see above). A direct parallel to the judiciary function of the bek in Khazaria can be made here.

283 Dunlop 1967, 188; Artamonov 1962, 275.

in the public sphere.[284] The account, on the other hand, does not just speak of women of high rank, but of a khatun, the wife of the khagan! Records on the reign of Parsbit between 730 and 731, who agreeably was not the wife, but the mother of the deceased khagan, clearly show her authority as a ruler. Taking into consideration Boariks, the ruler of the Sabirs, and Akaga who ruled the Utigurs (in the sixth century), the significant role that women played in steppe societies cannot be denied.[285] In 758 the abovementioned khatun (the daughter of the Khazar khagan, who, accompanied by tarkhans, married the Abbasid governor of Armenia), after acquainting herself with the Muslim religion, took off her sword and dagger.[286] It is important to emphasize here that the sword is the symbol of kingship.[287] In the minds of the peoples of Middle Asia, the wife or mother of the ruler had a certain ruling authority. Thus, the mother of Oghuz Khagan was called Ay Khagan. The Oghuz upheld the notion that the most important virtue of a wife was the ability to replace her husband in his absence and to perform the duties of the head of the family.[288]

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284 Dunlop 1967, 188.

285 Artamonov 1962, 211 and 217. In Shevchenko's opinion, "the sacralization of power is characteristic for the Indo-Iranian tribes, but the matriarchal traditions of the Sarmatians were especially well suited for this kind of order. According to these traditions, the women representing the tribal nobility gained spiritual powers at birth, in addition to their high social status" (Shevchenko 2006, 151–152). He associates a specific group of objects found in burials in the Northwest Caucasus (including scepters shaped like the world tree) and dated between the first century BC to the third century AD with these "priestesses" (Shevchenko 2006, 141–150). In his view, "the performance of priestly duties could have become the ultimate manifestation of the special status of women" (Shevchenko 2006, 151). During the first half of the first century BC, such scepters began to appear also in male burials, which according to Shevchenko 2006, 152 is a reflection of the society's changing way of life. The unification of spiritual and secular power was subject to a new principle: man-warrior-chieftain-shaman. He also interprets the appearance of head adornments with images of the tree of life (in the area around the Lower Don and the Kuban) as a sign of the secular rulers' spiritual power. Notwithstanding, the role of women in the spiritual realm was not lost and existed at least until the late third century AD.

286 Artamonov 1962, 241–242.

287 On the symbolic meaning of the sword, see Stepanov 1999a, 132–138.

288 Korogly 1976, 42, 114–115, and 158. In the steppes, prior to their marriage the women had the status of warriors, bearing arms and participating in battles. The Khazar khatun could have laid down her sword and dagger not because she had gotten acquainted with the rules of Islam, but because she got married. On the role of women among the steppe peoples, see: Khazanov1970, 138–148; Skripkin 1996, 168; Tolstov 1948b, 100; Davletshin 1990, 94; Pletneva 1998; Stepanov 2005a, 88–109.

Similar is the role of the kavkhan in the Bulgarian state as a vicegerent of the ruler in his absence.[289] John Exarch writes: "As the prince, when going to war or elsewhere, leaves a deputy to judge and exercise power, and with his homecoming the latter loses his power; and when the prince does so many times—appoints and removes the deputy, he himself always remains the ruler and master, his power is not diminished by his absence, and his deputy is always slavishly submissive—so the light rules the air with its brilliance".[290] According to V. Giuzelev, "for the Bulgarians of the Early Middle Ages the existence of the state was unthinkable not only without a king, but also without a kavkhan".[291]

A. Kaloianov expresses a rather different view, presuming that the vicegerent in Bulgaria was the *kana boila kolobur*.[292] The koloburs are usually identified with priests (Magi), with the kana boila kolobur being seen as the high priest. One of the main functions of the koloburs was to ward off the elemental forces. Their position was not passive, meaning that they were not tied to a particular temple or sanctuary. They were part of the army and participated in military campaigns.[293] According to A. Kaloianov, the reason Kana Persian remained in Pliska during the military campaign of 837 was the apparition of Halley's Comet. It was seen as God's omen for natural disasters, wars, epidemics and last but not least—for the death of kings. Its apparition justified rebellions against authority. The existence of such a notion in Bulgaria is confirmed by John Exarch who noted that there were stars that foreboded the death of kings. A. Kaloianov also quotes T. Mollov who sees a connection between the murder of Aaron in 989 and the apparition of Halley's Comet. Thus, in view of this mystical celestial omen, in 837 the ruler's vicegerent was the kana boila kolobur.[294] The theory of the vicegerency of the kana boila kolobur is not incompatible with the vicegerency of the kavkhan. Given that the ruler of Bulgaria held both the administrative, military and spiritual power, and the kavkhan's functions were associated with the first two, it seems only logical to assume that there was also a vicegerent for the spiritual power, especially in such exceptional occasions as the apparition of Halley's Comet.

289 Giuzelev 2007, 115.

290 Giuzelev 2007, 115. See also Ioan Ekzarkh. *Shestodnev*, in Kochev 2000, 50.

291 Giuzelev 2007, 88.

292 Kaloianov 2003, 151–156.

293 On the koloburs, see Stepanov 1999a, 87–89; Stanilov 2003b, 22.

294 Kaloianov 2003, 151, 204, and 214–215; see also Mollov 1997, 111–120. A similar belief existed in Bulgaria until the mid-nineteenth century, when the death of the Russian tsar was explained with the apparition of a tailed star (Marinov 2003, 45).

The examples from Bulgaria show different possibilities of interpreting the vicegerency of the supreme ruler. Assuming that the dual kingship in Khazaria was also a result of the beliefs of the population subject to the khagan, then it is only natural that the notion of power was accompanied by various nuances and differences. The distribution of authority between the two rulers was probably influenced by mythological notions. Their powers could have changed their essence, depending, for example, on the seasons or different natural phenomena.

The functions of the vicegerent are also depicted as varied in Bulgarian folklore. Despite the late date (the nineteenth century), it reflects ancient notions of sovereignty and its duality. In support of his theory of the Bulgarian diarchy, A. Kaloianov cites the perception of Marko as a king and his companion *ban*, both of whom are "two sons of a king". "While the first one is characterized by his immobility and his location in the center, the second one is the active one, the "irrational" one, the traveling one, knowledgeable in his contact with the other world and with all things sacred . . . The younger one (the ban) is actually only a stand-in in the conquest of the bride (the time for a new annual cycle), while the older one (the king) is the groom, which is why the ban is riding his horse instead of him".[295]

There is one more interesting example of Marko and the Bulgarian notion of dual kingship. According to Pl. Bochkov, "in the most popular stories, the hero (Marko) is held captive in a dungeon (= temporary death), which causes a destabilization of the order, the "cosmos" [. . .] The king (or the tsar, sultan or pasha)—i.e. the character, personifying the state and thus the stability and sovereignty, asks the hero to save him from his misfortunes and to restore the status quo that has been violated (not so much by the actions of the enemy as by the hero's absence). Marko accepts and goes to battle which he wins with some outside help, since he is usually weaker than Musa, and destroys him [. . .] The role of the king as a mediator in this battle is determined by his identification as "the vicar of God" who judges and is the administrator of justice—and a potential hypostasis of the hero himself". According to some versions of the story, "the hero kills Musa at the request of Tsar Ivan Shishman and then marries his daughter, thus becoming his equal by entering the "royal" family; he also finds himself on the same level as the pauper from folk tales that became the king's son-in-law".[296] This is a common plot that resembles the ancient

295 Kaloianov 2003, 150–152.

296 Bochkov 1994, 43–44. Similar notions, related to different aspects of the sacral king and sacral regicide mythology, are also found in various Bulgarian medieval works. Among the rulers there are "motifs of initiatory death (the ruler dies for five years to be reborn

tradition of kingship inheritance through the female line of descent. The one who marries the king's daughter,[297] usually after passing some sort of test, becomes the ruler.

This theme is preserved in folk tales, especially ones about the dragon that takes a maiden each year. In the end, when it is the turn of the king's daughter, the young hero slays the dragon and marries her.[298] G. Davletshin draws a parallel with a similar folk tale, once popular among the Volga Bulgars and the peoples along the Middle Volga Region (a part of the Khazar Khaganate), that is still told by Kazan Tatars today: "Somewhere in a lake, not far from the capital city, there lived a monstrous dragon that demanded a king's daughter every year".[299] The scholar connects this folk tale with the account of Ibn Fadlan, according to whom the daughter of the Bulgar ruler was kept in the harem of the Khazar khagan. Since the capital center Itil was located on the Volga delta and the khagan lived separately on an island, connected to the rest of the city by a bridge, G. Davletshin sees this account as a reflection of the notion of the water-dwelling dragon or serpent. And in the legends of the Kazan Tatars the Khazar Khaganate is called Land of the Dragon.[300]

In the steppe tradition, the dragon symbolizes the Upper World (the skies) and royal sovereignty. The Huns named some of their cities after the dragon.[301]

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as a young hero), of initiatory stay *in medio mundi* for a certain ritual period of time (Gagen Odolian stays in Sredets for three years and three months, before defeating Gordie Chigochin), of initiatory battles with the forces of evil, etc [...] the dynasty lineages are difficult to trace, since many of their rulers acquire their own kingdoms. [...] The slaying of rulers (of Gordie Chigochin near the double-mouthed well in the field of Sredets and of Gagen Odolian at Edrilo Field) [...] reflects a mythologem, closely related to the Saturnalian change of generations—the one about the change of ruler through a duel between the reigning king and a pretender to the throne" (Iordanov 1995, 32–33).

297 See for instance Frazer 2006, 152–155.

298 Frazer 2006, 143–144; on various Bulgarian folk tale storylines, see Mollov 1997, 127–129 and corresponding notes. Also of interest is another group of Bulgarian folk tales, in which the king's daughter marries the son of a snake or snake/zmei, after passing a series of challenges, not unlike the hero (Benovska-Subkova 1995, 25–26).

299 Davletshin 1990, 106.

300 Davletshin 1990, 106–107. The notion of the ruler, whose palaces were on an island, was probably a part of the overall mythological belief that "one of the paradigmatic images of creation is the Island that suddenly manifests itself in the midst of the waves [...] the symbolism of the waters implies both death and rebirth. Contact with water always brings a regeneration: on the one hand because dissolution is followed by "a new birth", on the other because immersion fertilizes and multiplies the potential of life" (Eliade 1998a, 93).

301 Stepanov 2005a, 51–52.

Its image is also found on Bulgarian medieval monuments (from the Second Bulgarian Empire and in Volga Bulgaria). The dragon is the mediator between the Lower and the Upper World and incorporates the symbols of fire and water.[302] The dragon is similar to the *zmei* in Bulgarian folklore (*zmei*—a fantastic creature in Bulgarian folklore, similar to the dragon or serpent. The word itself can be seen as a masculine form for the Slavic word for *snake*). According to some Bulgarian beliefs, the *zmei* sits in the crown of the tree and is comparable to the eagle (in its role as dragon-fighter) and not the snake which lies amid the roots.[303] It is possible that a similar notion is reflected in the image of the world tree, depicted on a series of ceramic vessels found it the Agachkala settlement in Dagestan and dated from the first half of the eighth century.[304] There, the crown of the tree is replaced by a snake, curled in the shape of a spiral. L. Gmyria interprets the appearance of the snake as a trend towards the substitution of the female deity (the tree) with the male one (the snake).[305]

T. Mollov takes up another semantic thread, though still associating the *zmei* with the water element and the royal dynasty, with his interpretation of the *hala* Semendra from Bulgarian folklore (cf. the names of Smederevo and of the old Khazar capital Samandar). According to one possibility, Semendra originates from Thracian beliefs, in which the name Skamander is given to a river near Troy, presented by Homer as a river god and ancestor of the Trojans.[306] In the Bulgarian essay *The Miracle of Saint George and the Dragon*, "among the deities worshipped by the forefathers of the maiden, saved by the saint, are "Heraklion and Apollo [...] Skamander and Artemis", and Skamander could also symbolize the water *zmei*.[307] Another possibility in T. Mollov's view is the connection with the salamander lizard or the "river monster" which the men hide from when they go down to the river to gather sand for the ritual table on the night before Christmas.[308]

Of particular interest is the Bulgarian belief that the *zmei* originates from a snake, a grass-snake or a carp that has lived 40 years without being seen by

302 Doncheva-Petkova 1996, 82–84.

303 Georgieva 1993, 52–54; Benovska-Subkova 1995, 74 and 133.

304 This series is closely associated with images of the world tree from the complex of the Urtseki hillfort, dated between the fourth and seventh centuries. See Gmyria 2008.

305 Gmyria 2008, 19 assuming that the image in question is of a male deity, the snake is usually the husband of the Goddess (see for instance Campbell 2005, 29). In this case, her cult is not necessarily being "substituted".

306 Mollov 1997, 147.

307 Mollov 1997, 148.

308 Mollov 1997, 148–150.

human eyes.[309] It can be compared to accounts from Eastern sources, in which the reign (and life) of the Khazar khagans last for 40 years, in a similar isolation (only certain people may see them and only after having been ritually cleansed by fire).

According to Eastern sources from the ninth and tenth centuries, the Khazar khagan had 25 wives, all of whom were daughters of 25 subordinate rulers.[310] On the basis of the connection between the *zmei* (dragon) and royal sovereignty, it is worth wondering whether these 25 "kingly" daughters did not actually legitimize the khagan's power over the lands of their fathers. Ibn Fadlan mentions that the daughter of Almish, the ruler of the Volga Bulgars, was taken by force (with a military expedition) to the harem of the Khazar khagan, after which she died. The khagan then demanded another daughter. Fearing a new military attack, the Bulgar ruler gave his second daughter to the ruler of the Esegel tribe that was subordinate to him. While he waited for the Khazars to organize a second military campaign, he also wrote to the Caliph in Baghdad.[311]

The Khazar dual kingdom suggests an ideology able to unite the Khazar nobility and the diverse population, subject to it. It is based on the mythological understanding of the world order and the divine origin of power, which defines its sacralized character. The differences in the interpretations of the rulers' authority are a reflection of the steppe tradition. Celestial grace is received during the ritual of enthronization. From then on, the ruler becomes identical to the original king (the culture hero) and assumes great responsibilities. He becomes responsible for the existence of the order (the Universe) and the continuation of life. This "responsibility on the cosmic plane"[312] is not always compatible with political power. Artifacts such as the silver vessel from

309 Georgieva 1993, 109; Benovska-Subkova 1995, 43 and 100.

310 Ibn Fadlan. *Puteshestvie do Volzhska Bulgariia*, in Naumov 1992, 76; see also Dunlop 1967, 109; Artamonov 1962, 190–191.

311 Kovalevskii 1956, 141. It is known that two more ruler's daughters were sent to the harem of the Khazar khagan: the daughter of the ruler of the Caucasian Huns in the 680s and the daughter of the Alanian ruler, with the latter, according to the *Cambridge Document*, becoming the wife of Joseph after the subjugation of Alania (during the reign of his father, Aaron). See the text in Golb and Pritsak 1997, 141. See also Tortika 2006a, 212–215.

312 Eliade 1998a, 67; the "offering" of the sacral king in sacrifice (in the way Mithra is) reflects this ancient system of beliefs. "According to the primitive view represented in those rites, the world is to be not improved but affirmed, even in what to the rationalizing moralist appears to be its most horrible, ungodlike sinfulness: for precisely in that resides its creative force, since out of death, decay, violence, and pain comes life [...] The virtue of heroism must lie, therefore, not in the will to reform, but in the courage to affirm the nature of the Universe" (Campbell 2005, 267).

Kotskii affirm the existence of concepts, consistent with the overall idea of the sacral king and the sacral regicide. It can be assumed that similar beliefs were professed by the majority of the pagan population of Khazaria. This does not mean that the whole system of values, signified by them, was implemented in reality. However, accounts of the Khazar dual kingship during the tenth century make it clear that the Khazar elite conformed to it. Despite its Judaization, the Khazar state continued to exist also in the tenth century due to the support of the pagan population, which was probably the most numerous in the khaganate. However, "a common ideology does not necessarily mean that rulers and ruled share identical views [...] For a government to function adequately, it seems to be sufficient when there is a certain degree of overlap in the views on government and policy".[313]

1.5 Judaic Influence on the Notions of Power in Khazaria

The way in which the Judaization of the Khazar nobility affected the development of the notions of power cannot be traced with certainty. No one knows what the Khazar dual kingship looked like prior to the conversion to Judaism (and if it existed at all). Neither is it clear whether the accounts from the Eastern sources of the tenth century actually reflect the reality in Khazaria. Assuming that the bek's power in Khazaria was justified by certain Old Testament motifs and that the Khazar dual kingship reflected to some extent the king-priest pair,[314] the problem then lies in the vagueness of the Jewish tradition on the matter. Not accidentally, Christianity, where the concepts of kingship and priestship are mainly based on Old Testament examples, has yet to reach a consensus on this. These discrepancies give rise to different views on the two powers and thus lead to lengthy disputes.[315]

Muslims use the term "malik" to denote royal, "executive" power, while the sacral ruler is the Caliph in his role as "the vicar of God"; thus in the Koran David is referred to as a Caliph.[316] While the Arab Caliphs initially held both powers, during the tenth century and especially after 945 (the fall of Baghdad to the Buyids) they began to be regarded mainly as sacral figures associated with spiritual authority (this process initially began during the reign of the

313 Claessen 1988, 24–25.

314 Stepanov 2003a, 221; Petrukhin 2001, 76.

315 On this issue, see Dagron 2006. See also Vachkova 2001; Bakalov 1995; Bozhilov 2008.

316 Dagron 2006, 79.

first Abbasids in the eighth century).[317] According to Judaism, "both kingly and priestly duties are immanently inherent to each member of the Jewish community following the calling of Abraham".[318] Gradually the idea was formed that the whole royal and priestly authority belonged to the Messiah alone or (from the Christian point of view) to Jesus Christ.[319]

Actually according to Old Testament tradition, the division between spiritual and secular powers was established long before the rule of the first Jewish kings and went as far back as the time of Moses and Aaron. The priestly power was the one that was hereditary (it belonged to the Tribe of Levi). While Jehovah gave the Law to Moses, it was the high priest that became its guardian and interpreter.[320] Thus, later on "Ezra was the priest that carried and promulgated the Book of the Law, while Nehemiah was the secular ruler that ensured that the Law was observed".[321] However, the Jews themselves did not always abide by the separation of spiritual and secular power. The fusion between the two powers was achieved by Jonathan and even more so by his successor Simon whose power is comparable to that of Melchizedek (king and high priest), whom the Christians saw as equivalent to Jesus.[322]

According to Jewish tradition, kingship is a gift from God. The anointing ceremony transforms the would-be ruler into "a new man", adopted by God and filled with His Spirit.[323] The kings, however, are only vicars of Jehovah who is the true and ultimate king. As a result they cannot change the Law, given by Him. But they wield judicial power, since the Jewish king is also chief judge. He is primarily a military leader, also responsible for construction and the welfare of his people. The Jewish king is a spiritual pastor, or has religious and cult functions. He can appoint or remove high priests at the temple, but only from the tribe of Aaron.[324] The king's position in ancient Israel ensured the maintenance of the cosmic order and the fertility of the land. Natural disasters were considered God's punishment and a violation of the Law and could lead

317 See for instance Müller 2004a, 730–769; Gumilev 1997, 218.

318 Vachkova 2001, 41.

319 Vachkova 2001, 41; Dagron 2006, 203.

320 Vachkova 2001, 42.

321 Vachkova 2001, 44–45.

322 Vachkova 2001, 45–46; on Melchizedek, see Dagron 2006, 198–204; Bozhilov 2008, 151–154.

323 Dagron 2006, 77; Vulchanov 1996, 25.

324 Grubarg 2002, 131–137. In this sense, an interesting parallel can be found in the accounts of Al-Istakhri and Ibn Hawqal. According to them, the king (bek) was also commander-in-chief, collector of duties and tributes and the highest judicial authority. The khagan, although being above the king, was appointed by him and belonged to the same family (Novosel'tsev 1990, 141).

to the removal of the king.[325] In the Old Testament, "the direct connection between the Anointed One and God allows for the mixing of the monarchic, priestly and prophetic fields. The king, conceived by Jehovah, not only possesses a sacred quality; he also by roght takes on the priestly function as mediator between God and the people".[326] Therefore, according to Jewish beliefs, the positions of both the priests and the king have a dual nature. "There was a distinction between the charismatic kingship of unction and the hereditary kingship of the national leader, between the priesthood reserved for the priests and the royal priesthood".[327]

If Jewish tradition cannot provide a clear answer to the issue of power division in Khazaria, then maybe it is possible to comprehend its influence with the help of the *Khazar Correspondence*. The information that is relevant in this matter is related to the Judaization of Khazaria. The *Khazar Correspondence* provides us with two different accounts. The first one can be regarded as the official (state) one and is included in the letter of the Khazar ruler Joseph, while the second one is by a Khazar Jew, perhaps not unlike the writer of the *Cambridge Document* himself.

Joseph's version is as follows: an angel appeared to a king (Bulan) who was a wise man. He told him that God wanted to give him a law and rules. Bulan in turn told the angel that the people he governed were unbelievers and asked him to appear to a chief prince who was among them (i.e. the people). The angel fulfilled his request and appeared in a dream to the chief prince. He in turn shared his dream with Bulan and the king summoned all the princes (i.e. there were others besides the chief prince!), his slaves and all the people. He told them about the angel and his wish and they accepted the new faith.[328]

The ancestors of the *Cambridge Document* writer were Jews who fled from Armenia to Khazaria. There they intermingled with the Khazars, fought alongside them and gradually became one people. At that point the Khazars did not have a king and whoever won a battle became commander-in-chief. Thus,

325 Eliade 1997, 408–409; Shivarov 1996, 36.

326 Dagron 2006, 300.

327 Dagron 2006, 78.

328 Kokovtsov 1932. The motif of dreams preceding the adoption of a new religion, followed by a religious dispute, is widespread in the steppe world (see Golden 2007b, 130). The dream is part of Christian and Muslim writings related to the change of religion. In these narratives, the authors present the life of such a person (in our case, Bulan) as an example for others. The dream itself marks "the transformation of the former self into a new spiritual individual". An interesting aspect in Christianity is the role of the woman in the dream as a model for piety and power, restraint or wisdom/knowledge, while among the Muslims this model is more often related to genealogy/ancestry (see Jones 2003).

this position came to be filled by a Jew. However, he was one of the Jews who, over time, adhered less and less to the tenets of faith. Watching him, the Lord decided that the commander-in-chief must be returned to Judaism. The influence of his wife (!) Sarah (and that of her father as well) was of help in this matter. Subsequently, a religious dispute was held in the Khazar state. Since the Greeks (Byzantines) and the Arabs could not reach a consensus, "the leaders of Khazaria" announced that somewhere in the Tizul River Valley there was a cave with books and requested those to be interpreted. It turned out that the books contained the Torah of Moses and they were explained by the sages of Israel. Thus, Judaism was adopted in Khazaria, which caused an influx of Jews from Baghdad, Khorasan and "the land of Greece" (Byzantium). Then "one of the Jewish sages who had engaged in the disputation thereafter was chosen by the people of Khazaria to be their chief judge. The Khazars had always held that the Khazarian personal name of this sage was KGN (Khagan—*Author's note*); for which reason all subsequent chief judges of the Khazars bore the same official name once appointed to office (also in the mid-tenth century—*Author's note*). At the same time the proselytized Khazars changed the name of their warrior chief to Sabriel, [...] naming him as their first king".[329]

According to D. Dunlop, the military commander Sabriel was actually Bulan that Joseph mentioned, only with a Judaic name. The *Cambridge Document* presents not only the establishment of the dual kingdom, but also the creation of the khaganate itself (the selection of the judge KGN). The position of Sabriel is identical to that of the bek, as seen in the Eastern sources. Thus, the *Cambridge Document* shows that "after the conversion the Khazars appointed a Khagan as judge, subordinate, apparently, to Sabriel, who became king. This reverses the historical relationship, and as it stands is quite incredible [...] According to the *Document*, the first Khagan was one of the wise men, these presumably being the "wise men of Israel" mentioned just before. But that a Jewish rabbi was ever Khagan of Khazaria, as seems to be said, is beyond the bounds of possibility. It is quite possible that Jewish judges were appointed after the conversion, but of a constitutional change on the scale indicated at this time there can be no question. The *Document* gives the story of Bulan, from a different angle and under a Hebrew name. To say that he was of Jewish origin may be right, but it is more likely that he belonged to the Turkish house from which earlier Khagans of Khazaria had sprung [...] The misinformation about the Khaganate could be explained by the impression which the writer

329 Golb and Pritsak 1997, 138–140. Shapira 2005a, 507 draws attention to the fact that the dream motif is not present in the *Cambridge Document*.

of the Document had gathered of the later situation of the Khazar Khagans and possible confusion of the title with the Hebrew word for "wise", *hākhām*".[330]

M. Artamonov also assumes that Sabriel was the Jewish name of Bulan. The information in the *Cambridge Document* on the judge/khagan and the king presents the Khazar dual kingship as we know it from Eastern sources of the tenth century; and regarding the khagan, a parallel can be made with the ancient Jewish judges.[331] In A. Novosel'tsev's opinion, the great prince (lit. "big head") that Joseph mentions provides the only indication of the existence of a khagan among the Khazars. Bulan was the precursor of the bek, who succeeded in convincing the khagan to convert to Judaism. According to the scholar, the image of the khagan, as shown in the *Cambridge Document*, is distorted. On the one hand, the khagan appears after the Judaization, but on the other, "he is present in the form of a sage (*khokhem*), which "the people of the land" [...] chose as judge (*shofet*), and those judges (khagans) exist to this day ... The *Cambridge Document* writer attempted to depict the khagan as the supreme arbiter of power, which in fact and according to his own account lay in the lands of another. This other person was called Ha-Sar Ha-Gadol (the great prince—*Author's note*), i.e. a term that Joseph himself uses for the khagan! However, it is immediately clarified that the Khazars made this Ha-Sar Ha-Gadol king, and King Joseph stemmed from him".[332]

According to D. Shapira, the title of 'judge' (*shofet*) should not be interpreted literally (in the modern sense of the word), but in the Biblical sense; in other words the khagan accepted an ancient, obsolete title that was inherited from that of the kings.[333] The ancient Jewish judges actually represented the "secular", "executive" power, while the title of *kogen* (if this is the word hiding behind the initials KGN) is related to the clergy. If both titles refer to the khagan, then it is not clear what the writer of the *Cambridge Document* meant to say. The last judge of Israel, Samuel, was forced to establish a kingly institution at the request of the people who wanted a king to judge them "as it was amongst all peoples".[334] If such a generalization is possible, judging is an activity that in the Biblical sense should reflect the "secular" prerogatives of power. On the other hand, the titles of *kogen* and *levi* (Levite) were hereditary and intended only for

330 Dunlop 1967, 158–161.

331 Artamonov 1962, 275–276 and 411.

332 Novosel'tsev 1990, 136–137; see also Shapira 2005a, 507–509.

333 Shapira 2005a, 507; according to Kovalev 2005a, 233, the *shofet* title indicated that after the Judaization the role of the khagan acquired the traits of an ancient Judaic religious institution, which left him outside the prerogatives of secular authority.

334 Lecheva 2003, 7–8.

the descendants of the High Priest Aaron and the Tribe of Levi which helped the *kogens* to perform the Temple service.[335] Since the *Cambridge Document* reveals that their ancestors (of the Khazar Jews or the Khazars?) originated from the Tribe of Simeon, and in the Bible Simeon and Levi are brothers, N. Golb suggests that these are "elements of a historical myth developed after the acceptance of Judaism by the Khazars, according to which some parts of the brother tribes of Simeon and Levi had in remote times been scattered by the Lord even as far as the land territories of Khazaria". This myth justified the assumption by the Khazar priestly charismatics of the title *kogen*, and by their associates and assistants on the title *levi*. "The levitical priestly element was a necessary part of the Khazarian *mythos* explaining the "return" of the Khazars to Judaism".[336]

But what should be understood here as "the Khazarian mythos"? Did it belong to the ethnic Khazars or, rather, to the Jews of Khazaria who aligned the functions of the Khazar khagan to those of the Old Testament kogens? This provides an opportunity for the explanation of the Khazar dual kingship since, according to N. Golb, during the reforms of Obadiah the functions of the priests, and with them of the Levitical assistants, thereafter were of a more circumscribed ceremonial nature as is customary in rabbinical Judaism.[337] During the Judaization, the khagan simply became a kogen, also aided by the phonetic similarity between the two titles. N. Golb assumes that Sabriel who was proclaimed king is identical to Bulan, mentioned by Joseph.[338]

According to O. Pritsak, the writer of the *Cambridge Document* was a Jew and a subject of Joseph. He follows a local Jewish unofficial tradition in contrast to the royal official one, reflected in Joseph's Reply. The *Document* relays the legend about the origin of the institution of permanent kingship which developed from the institution of temporary military commanders. During the ninth and the tenth centuries, these were the beks the sources mentioned. The presence of the khagan (kogen) reflects the views, contemporary to the author, which interpret the former imperial title (khagan) as judge.[339] Ts. Stepanov is also of the opinion that "the Schechter text [...] shows the perception the Khazars of the tenth century had of their khagans—they saw them first and

335 Golb and Pritsak 1997, 43.
336 Golb and Pritsak 1997, 44.
337 Golb and Pritsak 1997, 45.
338 Golb and Pritsak 1997, 130.
339 Golb and Pritsak 1997, 155–158.

foremost as "sages" and "judges", and not as warriors, administrators, builders, legislators, etc.".[340]

V. Petrukhin also traces Old Testament motifs in the *Cambridge Document*. After the Exodus from Egypt and the settlement in the Promised Land came the Period of Judges, during which the judge Samuel anointed to the throne Saul, the first ruler. "In this manner, the compiler of the *Cambridge Document* [...] explains the origin of the diarchy among the Khazars in a "historical" way (by using the Biblical story)".[341] Examining the text of Joseph, V. Petrukhin concludes that it is unclear who in fact is the khagan—Bulan or the so-called great prince. In his opinion, the succession king-princes-slaves-the people resembles the Turkic "triad" khagan-beks-the people, although there are some Biblical parallels.[342]

Actually, the ambiguity in the images of Sabriel and Bulan hinders the interpretation of the information on dual kingship, contained in the *Khazar Correspondence*. The account of the *Cambridge Document* is more definite. Firstly, the people of Khazaria chose one of the sages as judge, named KGN (khagan) in the Khazar language. It is not clear whether the sage, appointed to this position, was among the Jewish sages that took part in the religious dispute or was just one of the wise men of Khazaria. The first possibility is rightly rejected by D. Dunlop, on account of which he regards the whole account as false (see above). One of the main characteristics of the Turkic khagans is wisdom. Thus, in this sense there is no great discrepancy between the *Cambridge Document* and the perception of the khagans. It is also quite logical that the warlord Sabriel was proclaimed king, and since later on in the *Document* the same title is used for both Benjamin, Aaron and Joseph, Sabriel can be seen as the ancestor of the Khazar ruling dynasty, the representatives of which bear the title of *bek* in Eastern sources. This is the reason for Sabriel to be identified with Bulan in Joseph's letter.[343] And this is where the main problem lies, since the description of Bulan, given by the Khazar ruler, is not so clear. First of all, Bulan is a king whose title has nothing to do with the Judaization process of Khazaria. Directly after stating that Bulan was king, Joseph emphasizes that he was also wise. Bulan believed in God; he expelled the diviners and idolaters from the land and sought protection and patronage from God. Later on in the letter comes the episode of the angel that appeared firstly to Bulan and then, by his request—to the so-called great prince who was among the people.

340 Stepanov 2003a, 224.

341 Petrukhin 2001, 76.

342 Petrukhin 2001, 76.

343 See the text in Golb and Pritsak 1997, 138–142.

The role of the great prince seems more suitable for a warrior-king than for the sacral person of the khagan, which would remove the contradiction, found by A. Novosel'tsev. In other words, Joseph does not use this title for the khagan, but for the king (bek)—as it is used in the *Cambridge Document*. The text clearly shows that Bulan was worried about the reaction of the people, and therefore sought the assistance of the great prince. It seems to me that the above is very similar to the account of Al-Masudi, according to which the people, indignant at the misery that had befallen Khazaria, demanded the death of the khagan from the bek; the latter deciding his fate.[344]

Later on, while discussing the religious dispute, Joseph once again puts emphasis on the wisdom of the king. Bulan, and the dispute as a whole, can easily be compared to the parables of King Solomon. Among the descendants of Bulan were Obadiah and Joseph himself. It is clear that Bulan and Joseph should have the same title and position in the Khazar state. In this sense, of particular interest are the first sentences from Joseph's Reply: "The letter of Joseph the King, son of Aaron, king of Togarmah [...] a mighty king that no armies turn to flight and no troops force to retreat".[345] This definition has a correspondence (albeit exaggerated) in the accounts on the khagans of Khazaria, found in Eastern sources. When they exited the capital, hostilities were terminated.[346] Afterwards Joseph defines himself as "wise and honoring the wise [...] that chose (for himself) the word of the Law".

The account of Joseph allows the presumption that his title, like that of Bulan, was *khagan*. Nevertheless, it contradicts the *Cambridge Document*. This contradiction falls away if we presume that Sabriel and Bulan are different people. But then we would also have to assume that the author of the *Document* calls Joseph and his ancestors by the title which Sabriel first adopted in Khazaria, without the two being identical. And this is highly unlikely. In any case, it should be borne in mind that the *Cambridge Document* presents a Jewish point of view on the dual kingship in Khazaria, while Joseph's Reply is a manifestation of the official state view, which is also Khazar! If there are differences between the two, they should perhaps be sought in the traditions of Jews and Khazars, as well as in their understanding of sovereignty. It is also noteworthy that both documents refer to the Judaization as spread not only among the rulers and part of the nobility, but also among the rest of the nation, which was far from the reality in Khazaria.

344 Zakhoder 1962, 218.

345 Kokovtsov 1932.

346 See for instance Stepanov 2003a, 227. This parallel is also reflected in the notion of the khagans as peace-makers of the world (see Stepanov 2005a, 115 with n. 415).

According to D. Shapira, the ambiguity in the identification of the bek and the khagan in the *Khazar Correspondence* is due to the presumption that the beks acquired many of the sacral functions and qualities of the khagans and "the beliefs previously associated with the *qağan* were transferred to the figure of the *bek/mlk*".[347] If this is so, then there cannot be any talk of dual kingship in Khazaria, but rather of the replacement of one sacralized ruling house with another, and in both cases the rulers (the beks and the khagans) are bearers of both the secular and the priestly authority. However, the information on the Khazar dual kingship does not come from the *Khazar Correspondence*, but from Eastern sources. Without them this topic would probably not exist at all. Therefore, such a "seizure" of power authorities is hardly possible in light of the information we have on Khazaria.

For the same reason, A. Tortika's view that the Khazar dual kingship was in fact a change of the ruling dynasty cannot be accepted. The khagan not only lost his power, but the status of the bek's wife rose and she assumed the title of *khatun*[348] (a title that in the steppe world was given only to the wife of the khagan). This statement is not substantiated. According to A. Tortika, dynastic marriages also became a prerogative of the Khazar beks. He bases his assumption on the account in the *Cambridge Document* about the Alanian woman who married Joseph after his father, Aaron, subjugated Alania.[349] At the same time, A. Tortika notes that the story of a khatun who was of the Barsil people, contained in the *Armenian Geography*, shows "that this tribe had a special position in the khaganate, practically equal to that of the Khazars".[350] The information we have regarding the tenth century refers only to women, taken into marriage from subordinate lands and tribes, and is unrelated to the Khazar khatun. It should also be noted that the high status of the khatun in the state was inconceivable without the sacral character of the khagan.

On the other hand, A. Tortika claims that in the tenth century the Khazar khagans retained "only the right to ritual polygamy as described by Ibn Fadlan".[351] Ibn Fadlan, however, associated with the Khazar khagan both the 60 concubines and the 25 wives who were daughters of subordinate rulers.[352] So A. Tortika's theory not only does not clarify the power prerogatives of the two Khazar rulers, but also, in my opinion, leads to an opposite conclusion.

347 Shapira 2005a, 510.

348 Tortika 2006a, 214–217.

349 Tortika 2006a, 214.

350 Tortika 2006a, 211.

351 Tortika 2006a, 222–223.

352 Ibn Fadlan. *Puteshestvie do Volzhska Bulgariia*, in Naumov 1992, 76.

If the story in the *Cambridge Document* about the Alanian woman that became the wife of Joseph and Ibn Fadlan's account of the Volga Bulgar woman, possibly married to Aaron (as A. Tortika assumes),[353] refer to the above-mentioned 25 women, then they depict Aaron and Joseph more as khagans than as beks.

Given the strong focus on the Jewish tradition in the *Cambridge Document*, it is worth wondering what exactly the author means by the term KGN and whether it actually refers to the khagan. Is it not possible that this term simply conveys the Jewish title *kogen*, even though the *Document* specifically states that KGN was the title of the judge in the Khazar language? It could also be that it does not refer to the khagan, but to his vicegerent, if he was related to the Khazar dual kingship and if the bek in Khazaria resembled a supreme judge, as is stated in the Eastern sources. This idea is, of course, merely hypothetical. I am mentioning it only because such a possibility nevertheless exists. As we shall see later on, in the Magyar diarchy, which most likely originated from the Khazar one, the vicegerent had judicial functions.

Among the signatories of the *The Kievan Letter* (in the tenth century) from the local Jewish community there are two whose names are followed by the title *Kogen* and one with the title *Levite*.[354] Assuming that the *kogen* title was associated with the Khazar khagan, it would not be logical to presume that it was widely used in communities that were subjugated or related to the Khazar Khaganate. An interesting record by Al-Yaqubi (897) mentions the name of the vicegerent of the Khazar khagan—Yazid Bulash.[355] Such a name does not appear in the *Cambridge Document*, or in *Joseph's Reply*. It can be concluded from the account of the Khazar ruler that Yazid Bulash lived during the reign of Obadiah. Or he could have been his vicegerent. However, since the names of Obadiah's predecessors after Bulan are unknown to us, it is also possible that Yazid Bulash was the Khazar bek prior to Obadiah.

The accounts of Arabo-Persian authors from the tenth century on the Khazar dual kingship clearly indicate the place and role of the khagan and bek in Khazaria. But do these accounts really reflect the reality there? The problem lies in the similar information that the Eastern authors also give on the form of government of the Rus' and the Magyars. Of particular importance are the accounts regarding the Magyars whose structure and form of govern-

353 Tortika 2006a, 214; Ibn Fadlan does not mention Aaron by name, but states only that the Bulgar woman was married to the Khazar king (Ibn Fadlan. *Puteshestvie do Volzhska Bulgariia*, in Naumov 1992, 62).

354 Golb and Pritsak 1997, 31 and 42–43.

355 Beilis 1986, 141.

ment could be regarded as "constructed" by the Khazars and in some aspects a replica of the Khazar model.[356]

According to Gardizi and Ibn Rustah, the Magyars had two rulers who bore the titles of *kende* and *gyula*. The kende, accompanied by 20 000 horsemen, was the first in command, but the actual ruler was the gyula who was responsible for the military and other state affairs.[357] M. Artamonov presumes (on account of the 20 000 horsemen) that the kende was also the warlord, while the gyula managed all other affairs. The historian associates the title of *kende* with the Khazar kender khagan, mentioned by Ibn Fadlan, whose rank was below that of the bek.[358] In *Shahnameh*, a person with the title of *k.nd.r.* is described as fighting on the right side of the khagan.[359] This title is similar to the Bulgarian ichirgu-boil (the third highest rank in Bulgaria) who fought on the right side, in contrast to the kavkhan, who was on the left side.[360] The title *gyula* (*gila*) can be seen as a version of *djavshighar*,[361] mentioned by Ibn Fadlan as the vicegerent of the kender khagan (i.e. the fourth highest rank in Khazaria). The accounts of Ibn Rustah and Gardizi lead to the conclusion that the Magyars had a dual kingdom, similar to the Khazar one,[362] although G. Györffy claims that "the dignity of *kündü* was not yet endowed with the extreme characteristics of the sacred king, isolated from the mortals, which it became in the 9th–10th centuries among the Khazars".[363]

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356 Lastly, see Howard-Johnston 2007, 184–191.

357 Beilis 1986, 143; Golden 1980, 19; Zakhoder 1962, 227–228 and 1967, 48–49. There are also Byzantine and West European sources that speak of more than one ruler among the Magyars—see Györffy 1994, 88.

358 Artamonov 1962, 346–347.

359 Zakhoder 1962, 227.

360 See for instance Giuzelev 2007, 113.

361 Zakhoder 1962, 228.

362 Spinei 2003, 33; Zakhoder 1967, 49.

363 Györffy 1994, 91. Róna-Tas 2007, 275 does not accept the theory of the Magyars having a dual kingdom, since they did not have a sacral ruler. However, a significant part of the symbolism and essence of the notion of a sacral ruler can be found in the preserved legends about the fabled Magyar ruler Almus (Almos). Almus is mentioned by Constantine Porphyrogenitus, along with Levedias and the son of Almus, Arpad, as a Magyar voivode, worthy to be appointed ruler over the Magyars by the will of the Khazar khagan. The khagan first approached Levedias, but he suggested that Almus or Arpad be chosen as the ruler of the Magyars. Thus Arpad became the first ruler of the Magyars. He also stood at the helm during their migration to the west of the Carpathians (Litavrin and Novosel'tsev 1989, 161). According to legend, Almus, who was the son of Emesu (a Hungarian ancestress that was impregnated by the falcon Turul), was killed upon the arrival of the Magyars in

According to V. Spinei, during the settlement of the Magyars on the Middle Danube, the *gyula* title belonged to Arpad, while Kurszan was kende. Kurszan was killed in 904 during a battle with the Bavarians, after which Arpad's authority increased.[364] M. Artamonov assumes the opposite—that the title of *kende* belonged to Arpad, which he received in the form of *kender khagan* from the Khazars.[365] It is clear that the Eastern sources are not sufficient for the understanding of the Magyar dual kingship. Unlike the information on the Khazars, there is an important account by Constantine Porphyrogenitus: "They have for their first chief the prince who comes by succession of Arpad's family, and two others, the gylas and the karchas, who have the rank of judge", the first one of which stands above the latter.[366] In other words, the gila (gula-gyula) and the karchas or karkhan were the people that limited the power of the chief ruler and had judicial functions.[367] In the account, the similarity between the titles *karkhan* and *tarkhan* is clear. It is worth recalling the meaning of the *tarkhan* title as judge and his mention as king of Khazaria, which most probably made him the predecessor of the bek.

It is again Ibn Rustah and Gardizi who note a form of dual kingship among the Rus'. According to them, the Rus' had a king who was called khagan and had judicial power. The power of this khagan was limited by priests and medicine-men. Like the Khazar khagan, he lived on an island.[368]

Of greater interest with regard to the Rus' dual kingship is the account of Ibn Fadlan. He does not use the *khagan* title for the ruler of the Rus', calling him instead king (malik). His main occupation was to lay with his concubines, drink and be merry. The king had a vicegerent who managed the army and represented him in state affairs. In disputes between two people, if the king could not achieve reconciliation between the two, by his will the problem was resolved by a fight, with the winner having the right on his side.[369] This suggests a judicial function for the Rus' ruler who was limited in his power by his

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modern Hungary "in a solemn ritual, in order to transfer his power and wisdom to his successors" (Bellinger 2008, 34 and 204).

364 Spinei 2003, 33 and 70.

365 Artamonov 1962, 346–347. In Vernadski's view, the kender khagan represented the Magyar ethnic group in the Khazar government (Vernadskii 1997, 232).

366 Zakhoder 1962, 228. See the text in Constantine Porphyrogenitus. *De Administrando Imperio*, ch. 40, in Litavrin and Novosel'tsev 1989, 167.

367 Artamonov 1962, 347.

368 Konovalova 2001, 117–118; Zakhoder 1967, 78; Beilis 1986, 143–144.

369 Kovalevskii 1956, 146.

vicegerent. This information brings the Rus' government system closer to the Khazar one.[370]

T. Noonan does not believe that Ibn Fadlan's account refers to the land of the Rus' with the center of Kiev, since the Rurikids were far from such a practice. Such a form of government could have existed among the Rus' communities in today's Northern Russia.[371] On the other hand, some representatives of the Rurik dynasty bore the title of *khagan*.[372] However, the adoption of this title "was not accompanied by any elements of the state administrative system of Khazaria".[373] According to V. Petrukhin, "the stories about the ceremonial way of life of "the king of the Rus'," as well as of that of the Khazar khagan himself, were intended for an "outside" observer (Ibn Fadlan) and should not be associated directly with the realia of these worlds (this also applies to the notorious problem of the "diarchy" in Khazaria and the Rus' state)".[374] In other words, it appears that the notions of kingship that the population had may not have been implemented in its contemporary political reality. However, their understanding is important, because they often uphold the power itself, especially when it is sacralized. And what is actually real in the notion of a power, given that for the archaic, but not only, mentality "the outstanding reality is the sacred; for only the sacred *is* in an absolute fashion, acts effectively, creates things and makes them endure".[375]

According to an account of a Chinese traveler from the twelfth-thirteenth century that referred to the Byzantines, "Their kings do not last for long. They choose the most capable one and they put him on the throne; but if a misfortune or an unforseen event should befall the Empire, if the wind or the rain should arrive at the wrong season, then they immediately depose the emperor and put another in his place".[376] Such customs were, of course, never practiced in Byzantium.[377] As for Khazaria, it should be borne in mind that according to the *Russian Primary Chronicle*, in 965 the khagan himself led the army against

370 Dunlop 1967, 238; Zakhoder 1962, 205; Golden 2003, no. 6, 87.

371 Noonan 2001, 92–93. Tortika 2006a, 222 expresses a similar opinion.

372 On the issues regarding the so-called Rus' Khaganate, see Novosel'tsev 1982, 150–159; Golden 2003, no. 6, 81–97; Konovalova 2001, 117–125; Petrukhin 2001, 73–74 and 2005, 75–76; Stepanov 2000, 198–208.

373 Konovalova 2001, 125.

374 Petrukhin 2005, 76.

375 Eliade, 2002, 18.

376 Dagron 2006, 39.

377 See for instance Ostrogorski 1996; Bozhilov 2008.

the Rus' Prince Sviatoslav.[378] At the same time (as mentioned earlier) the authority of the Arab Caliph was too weak and he was primarily a sacral figure.

The question therefore is not only how and to what extent the tradition of the steppe peoples, along with Judaism have influenced the development or modification of the power structure in Khazaria, but also whether the pagan and Jewish population of the khaganate subsequently managed to consolidate them on a folkloric and mythological level. A. Poliak cites a legend, according to which "Abraham taught his offspring from Keturah the miraculous name of God: "They used it when praying for rain or victory (on the battlefield). There were those among them that settled in Khorasan. The Khazars came to them and said: Whoever taught you that deserves to be the most revered of the earthly dwellers or be the king of the world. This is why (the Khazars) called their kings khagans".[379] The parallel here is with the ancient Jewish title *hakham* (sage, rabbi), which the Khazars likened to *khagan*, having "learned of Abraham as a bearer of magical knowledge though the magic of the word".[380] This legend is similar to a genealogical myth of the Turks. Nishindu (Ichjiny-nishidu), also called "son of the she-wolf", had supernatural powers: he could draw forth wind and rain. He had two wives: one was the daughter of the summer spirit, and the other was the daughter of the winter spirit. His oldest son, born by his first wife, also had such powers, which is why he was chosen for chief ruler with the name of Tuque.[381] In other words, "the rise of one of the ancient Turkic houses that lead to the establishment of the Turkic state is directly associated with the ability to influence the forces of nature".[382] According to another legend, Noah taught Japheth the secret name of God that helped bring forth rain during a drought. Japheth wrote the name on a pebble and strung it around his neck, using it when necessary. Before dying, he gave the pebble to Oghuz, but his uncle also wanted it. So Oghuz gave it to Turk. Later, a war broke out between the Turks and the Oghuz for the pebble. Chin—a son of Japheth who was wise and had many diviners who foretold the future—interfered then. His diviners taught the Turks their trade.[383] These legends, which transmit the idea of a

378 Adrianova-Peretts 1950, 244.

379 Poliak 2001, 99.

380 Poliak 2001, 99.

381 L'vova, Oktiabr'skaia, Sagalev, and Usmanova 1988, 36; Kliashtornyi 1964, 105.

382 L'vova, Oktiabr'skaia, Sagalev, and Usmanova 1988, 36.

383 Korogly 1976, 88–89. The image of the miraculous pebble has an interesting parallel in Bulgarian folktales. In them, it is located underground, in a snake lair, and helps the hero fight hunger. The pebble is "a means to obtain temporary death". It is a source of various skills (for example, to understand the language of animals). After tasting the priceless snake-stone, the hero becomes "to a certain extent related to the underground kingdom

high power, capable of causing rain and ensuring victory in war, suggest that we should turn to a significant divine figure, associated with kingship, that is not mentioned in the sources on the Khazar Khaganate—the Great Goddess.

1.6 Sacred Kingship and the Cult of the Great Goddess in Khazaria

To become a real ruler, the Hunnic Chanyu had to possess sacral grace. Through it, he ensured the welfare of his people, as well as fertility, successful military campaigns, etc. This supernatural power was passed on by inheritance, and only in the ruling family.[384] Among the Iranians, the notion of sacral grace (charisma) is expressed with the concept of *hvarna, farn*, and among the Turks—with the concept of *qut*.[385] In ancient Iran and Turan, the rulers fought for this charisma and received it from Aredvi Sura Anahita. Its possession is also related to the Turanian sacred mountain in Kanha, which was probably a religious center and part of the Anahita cult.[386] A similar belief has been preserved among the Turks: *qut* could also be obtained from the sacred mountain Otuken, regarded as a female deity.[387] Thus, the Iranians and the Turks both believed that the most important quality a ruler needed to have to be able to govern was the result of the blessing and support of the Great Goddess.

The lack of any specific written sources on the divine pantheon of the peoples that constituted the basis of the Khazar Khaganate (Khazars, Bulgars and Alans) severely hinders the interpretation of their ruler ideology. With rare exceptions, some of which will be examined in more detail further on, we also have almost no information whatsoever on the neighboring and related ethnic groups and tribes. It is necessary to use ready-made models derived from

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of the snakes". After emerging from their lair, he marries one of them. The pebble is "a symbol that concentrates in itself a variety of semantic signs. The decisive one is the lunar symbolic, which in this case expresses the specific transition between life and death—a peculiar condition that is necessary for the existence of the underworld" (Benovska-Subkova 1995, 23–25 and 37). Also quite clear here is the link between this motif and the notion of the cave (snake lair) as a place that connects the underworld with the human one and is a dwelling place of the Great Goddess (cf. the Serpent-Legged Goddess of the Scythians). A part of this system is the Bulgarian notion of the snake "as an embodiment of the concept of the dead ancestors" (Benovska-Subkova 1995, 39), and in the steppe world the ruler officiated in a sacred cave, a cult that is closely related to the ancestor cult.

384 Kradin 2001a, 141–142.

385 Golden 1982, 44–46; Stepanov 2000, 182–183; Masao 1981, 58–75.

386 Vainberg 1990, 203–204 and 209.

387 Potapov 1973, 283.

common mythology and from subsequent folkloric notions. Regarding the notion of power in Khazaria such an approach is necessitated by several factors. Firstly, this is sacral kingship: it implies duality and "male-female" characteristics that are determined by the mythological notions of the population, subject to the Khazar khagans. Secondly, as we shall see later, there is significant circumstantial data (from archaeology and folklore), which makes it possible to determine some links between kingship and the cult of the supreme female deity. The problem here lies in the fact that the interpretation of this information is secondary and often a result of the use of other examples that are "external" for a given community. Such an approach could even be called structuralist, but I have to say that I am far from the idea of "layering" ready-made schemes and solutions regarding the relation between the khagan cult and the vague as yet outlines of the cult of a supreme female deity in Khazaria.

It seems to me that a suitable basis here would be Frazer's tale of the King of the Wood and Diana Nemorensis—a plot that represents "a single fundamental myth of the end and rebeginning of an eon".[388] To determine what the khagan or the king each represent, it is necessary to be well acquainted with Khazar mythology. For the moment, however, it can only be examined with regard to the mythology of the Bulgars and Alans. Up till now, no monuments or settlements that can be linked with certainty only with the Khazars have been found. An additional problem is that unlike the Bulgars and Alans who each have their own descendants, which makes the research of their mythological beliefs an achievable though time-consuming task, the Khazars have disappeared completely and left no ethnic group or nation which could be identified with them. And it is precisely the details and intricacies in the concepts of the world of the gods and that of the humans that are of importance and define the specificity in the notion of power. With regard to Khazaria these nuances remain unclear. So far, only certain directions for exploration can be

388 Campbell 2004, 405–406. A similarity with this topic can be found even today in the folk beliefs of Middle Asia. In the mazar of Khodzha Baror ("Mr. Luck") in the Ferghana Valley is preserved one of the most archaic cults. Of particular interest is the notion that Khodzha Baror has not died, but has simply disappeared and should return once more. However, the main cult there is of a group of trees (the main one of which is "pregnant") that on certain days and certain hours seep sap, believed to cure infertility. Gorshunova 2008, 71–82 associates this with the legend of how Zarathustra was conceived from a drink that was made from the sacred plant Haoma, mixed with milk. There is no lake on the site of the shrine, but according to a legend there once was. The shrine inherited the cult of the supreme female deity, probably Anahita. On similar shrines in Middle Asia, as well as on the legacy of the Anahita cult, see Snesarev 1973, 98–117; Snesarev 1983, 80–100 and 159–168; Sukhareva 1975.

provided, but no real understanding of the mythology of the Khazars, Bulgars and Alans. This would be even more difficult to achieve for each one of these three peoples individually.

As already mentioned, one of the ancient models that shows the connection between the Great Goddess and kingship is the cult of Diana Nemorensis, described by J. Frazer. Her sanctuary was located in a forest near a lake beneath some steep cliffs. Fire played an important role in the cult of the goddess who bore the title of Vesta. However, Diana was primarily associated with the sacred tree—an oak that was guarded by the King of the Wood, who, in his capacity as the successor of Virbius (the very first in this succession of kings), was also her husband. Actually, he was regarded as the husband of the water nymph Egeria who was one of the manifestations of Diana Nemorensis.[389] The King of the Wood probably impersonated Jupiter and "the goddess whom he served and married was herself no other than the Queen of Heaven, the true wife of the sky-god".[390] Of particular interest is the relationship between the nymph Egeria and the wise king Numa who was her husband and lover. They met secretly in the sacred grove of Diana. Egeria inspired king Numa with "more than mortal wisdom" and with the laws which he gave the Romans.[391] Thus, "in the legend of the nuptials of Numa and Egeria we have a reminiscence of a sacred marriage which the old Roman kings regularly contracted with a goddess of vegetation and water for the purpose of enabling him to discharge his divine or magical functions".[392]

A large part of Khazaria's lands once belonged to the Scythians. They are the oldest steppe people, whose religious system is documented. According to Herodotus, the supreme deity of Scythia was Hestia, called by the Scythians Tabiti (the Flaming One). He names two more goddesses: Gaea (Api) and Aphrodite Urania (Artimpasa).[393] The three goddesses reflect the different aspects of the figure of the Great Goddess as a mother (Api) and her daughter Tabiti as the celestial Maiden, as the unified but also presented in separate incarnations earthly (chthonic) and celestial (Uranic) principle. According to the genealogical legend of the Scythians, as told by Herodotus, after falling asleep and losing his horses, Heracles (Targitaus) found them in a cave. But in order to get them back, he had a love affair with the lady of the cave, the

389 Frazer 2006, 9–14 and 145.

390 Frazer 2006, 659.

391 Frazer 2006, 11 and 145.

392 Frazer 2006, 146.

393 Abaev 1962, 445; Raevskii 1977, 87 and 1985, 36; Marazov 1976, 45. See the text in Herodotus. *Histories* 4.59, in Dimitrov 1990, 25.

so-called Serpent-Legged Goddess (half-maiden, half-snake). Out of this liaison came three sons, the youngest of whom was Scythes. He became the ancestor of the Scythian kings.[394] The demi-serpent image of the ancestress of the Scythians, as well as the cave she lived in, indicate her chthonic nature and her connection to the fertility functions of the earth. It is therefore believed that the goddess is Api (Gaea—the Earth). Since the etymological meaning of the word *api* is "water", it could be concluded that this goddess symbolized earth and water for the Scythians. Alternatively, she was the Great Mother Goddess.

Diodorus calls the Serpent-Legged Goddess "a maiden born of the Earth",[395] i.e. a daughter of the Great Goddess. She conceived Scythes by Zeus. At the same time, Targitaus was the son of Zeus from the daughter of the Borysthenes River. The various female figures actually represent one goddess. As the wife of Zeus she is the Great Mother Goddess, but as a maiden she conceives from her son Targitaus and gives birth to the Scythians and their first ruler. The marriage of the Maiden Goddess ensures the fertility of the land. This is why each year the Scythian king inseminated the virgin land with a symbolic first ploughing and thus consummated his marriage with the goddess.[396] Thus, the Scythian Great Mother Goddess is also a Maiden. A similar belief is probably reflected in the myth of Hera who restored her virginity by immersing herself in the waters of Kanathos.[397]

The marriage of the Scythian king and the goddess could also be seen as a union of two fires—"a divine, supreme one, embodied in the fire goddess Tabiti, and a corporal one, embodied in the sun and represented by its epiphany, the king".[398] Through the marriage of the solar fire (represented by the Scythian king) and the divine one (the Celestial Goddess Tabiti), the Sun (the king) received new strength. Hence, each year the Scythian king married the goddess anew. This belief is associated with the notion of the waning and death of the sun and its rebirth. This leads to the annual killing of the ritual vicegerent of the Scythian king. Initially, he slept (which was equivalent to a temporary, symbolic death) next to the sacred golden royal objects. Once

394 Raevskii 1977, 21–22; Marazov 1976, 51; Venedikov 1997, 142–146. See Herodotus. *Histories* 4.8–10 in Dimitrov 1990, 11–12.

395 Diodorus. *Historical Library* 2.43, quoted from Raevskii 1977, 24.

396 Raevskii 1977, 20, 24, 42, 45, and 48–49; Raevskii 1985, 38, 41, and 53; Marazov 1976, 50 and 52; Abaev 1962, 447–448.

397 Marazov 1976, 49.

398 Raevskii 1977, 102.

awoken, the symbolic Scythian king had a clearly defined period of life (power)—one year.[399]

It could be presumed that such beliefs (the strangulation) were later reflected in the investiture custom of the khagans of the Turks and Khazars. Like them, the Scythian king was a mediator between his subjects and the world of the gods and thus was responsible for the fertility and the well-being of the Scythians.[400] The annual killing of the symbolic Scythian king resembles the myth of Adonis, the husband of Ishtar, who each year died, "passing away from the cheerful earth to the gloomy subterranean world".[401] The goddess is closely related to kingship, which is also indicated by the words of the Assyrian ruler Sargon (circa 2350 BC): "My mother was a high priestess. My mother, the high priestess, conceived me, in secret she bore me. She placed me in a basket [...] and cast me into the river [...] [When the goddess] Ishtar granted me her love, [...] I exercised kingship".[402]

According to J. Campbell, during the reign of both Sargon and the Babylonian ruler Hammurabi (circa 1728–1686 BC) a change in the cult of the Great Goddess seemed to occur, as a result of the emergence of the male solar deities. "The formula is derived from the older mythology of the goddess and her son, but with a transfer of interest to the son—who now is neither a god nor a dedicated sacrifice, but a politically ambitious upstart [...] the celestial orb to which the monarch (Hammurabi—*Author's note*) is now likened is no longer the silvery moon, which dies and is resurrected and is light yet also dark, but the golden sun, the blaze of which is eternal and before which shadows, demons, enemies, and ambiguities take flight. The new age of the Sun God has dawned, and there is to follow an extremely interesting, mythologically confusing development (known as *solarization*), whereby the entire symbolic System of the earlier age is to be reversed, with the moon and the lunar bull assigned to the mythic sphere of the female, and the lion, the solar principle, to the male".[403] Despite this a part of the old symbolic system, as well as its semantic content, remained in many parts of the world, existing in a sort of "conflict" with the new royal solar symbolism. In the steppe world and especially in Middle Asia, the rulers continued to be associated with the bull (including the solar Mithra) and the goddesses—with lions. With regard to the sacral king who was killed

399 Raevskii 1977, 110–112; Marazov 1976, 51.

400 Raevskii 1977, 163.

401 Frazer 2006, 304; a prototype of Adonis is the dying and rising Sumerian god Tammuz, husband and son by immaculate conception of the Mother Goddess (Campbell 2004, 50).

402 Venedikov 1995a, 74.

403 Campbell 2005, 84–86.

ritually, it is possible that the notion of the dying moon was replaced by the notion of the dying sun.

The death of Attis (the Phrygian Adonis) was mourned every spring, after which ensued celebrations of his resurrection. He was the lover of the Mother of the Gods Cybele and at the same time was her son.[404] According to Diodorus, Cybele was the daughter of the Lydian king Meon and his wife Dindimena who got her name from the Dindima Mountain. Since Meon did not want a daughter, she was left in the Cybelos Mountain, whereupon she was saved and fed by mountain cats and lionesses. The girl was raised by a shepherdess who named her after the mountain, Cybele, and the children called her Mountain Mother. Later, Cybele fell in love with Attis, also called Papas—Father (cf. the Scythian Papai-Zeus). However, King Meon killed Attis and banished Cybele. The goddess reached the cave of Dionysus. Then Apollo fell in love with her and took her away with him, which caused hunger and droughts in Phrygia. To save themselves, the Phrygians had to worship Cybele as a deity and to bury an effigy (a symbolic image) of Attis, since they could not find his body.[405]

It is the Celestial Maiden Tabiti (Hestia) that is the supreme female deity, "the queen of the Scythians". The name of the goddess, "the Flaming One", clearly indicates her association with fire. The Olympic Hestia is the goddess of the domestic hearth and the hearth in general. As guardian of the public hearth she gave a vow to remain a virgin, unmarried. Being a patroness of the royal hearth, Tabiti also protected the dynasty of Scythian kings.[406] The role of Tabiti as guardian of the domestic hearth depicts the goddess as a deity that connects the Lower World with the Middle (human) one. It could be presumed that her cult was part of the ancestor cult, making the figure of Tabiti close to that of the Serpent-Legged Goddess.[407] The statues of Hestia in the Tomb of

404 Frazer 2006, 327. According to one legend, his mother Nana ("mother"), also an incarnation of the Great Goddess, conceived him while still a virgin (Frazer 2006, 327).

405 Venedikov 1997, 346–347. On the Phrygian cult of Cybele and kingship, see Vasileva 2005. Midas was the son and high priest of Cybele (identified with a rock/mountain). According to Phrygian beliefs, knowledge comes from the world of the dead. The ruler restores order in the cosmos and society and he is responsible for the welfare of the state. He embodies the qualities of the deity of the dying and reviving nature. The Phrygian ritual practice is associated with running water, springs and woods. "The goddess has a prominent role in the burial rite. She is the sovereign over the life and death of the Phrygian ruler" (Vasileva 2005, 22, 36, 82–88, 98, and 120).

406 Raevskii 1977, 87–92; Marazov 1976, 49–50.

407 Marazov 1976, 49.

Sveshtari in Bulgaria show that the Thracians considered the goddess to be of a chthonic nature and associated with the underworld.[408]

According to a key account of Diodorus, "among the Arians Zathraustes claimed that Agathodaemon (the Good Spirit) gave him his laws, among the people known as the Getae who represent themselves to be immortal Zalmoxis asserted the same of their common goddess Hestia and among the Jews Moyses referred his laws to the god who is invoked as Iao".[409]

Hestia as a lawgiver resembles the notion of Egeria and the King of the Wood, but even more important are the identical roles of the Goddess of Celestial Fire and Jehovah. This parallel is not incidental, since in the Bible God gave the commandments to Moses in fire.[410] The teachings of Zalmoxis represent "the rules of life laid down by an earthly king who actually received the laws from the goddess Hestia [. . .] Zalmoxis and Hestia are connected to the state and the development of the religious and political power of the king".[411]

According to Strabo, Zalmoxis took possession of a cave in the mountains that was inaccessible to anyone else and spent his life there, only rarely meeting with other people except the king and his attendants.[412] Quite similar is the account of Ibn Fadlan regarding the Khazar khagan who did not receive anyone save the king and the two statesmen who were next in rank (the kender khagan and the djavshighar).[413]

The chthonic and celestial traits of the Great Goddess can also be found in one of the legends of Dionysus. His mother, Semele, who was the incarnation of the Earth Goddess, died at his birth "and went to the Underworld So Dionysus descended into the realm of the dead, took away Semele and led her to the heavens where she gained divine power and immortality".[414]

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408 Venedikov 1997, 351.

409 Venedikov 1995a, 199 (Diodorus. *Historical Library* 1.94).

410 Venedikov 1997, 349.

411 Venedikov 1997, 332.

412 Venedikov 1995a, 200–201. Strabo. *Geografiia* 7.3,5 in Rusinov 2008. The text of the classical writer is also quite interesting with regard to the dual kingship notion in Khazaria. Firstly, Zalmoxis (a man from the Getae) persuaded the king to take him as a counselor, since he could report the will of the gods. At the outset he was revered only as priest, but afterwards he was even addressed as god. This custom still existed during the time of Strabo (66–63 BC–circa 24 AD) and there was always a man among the Getae, who was the counselor of the king and who was addressed as god. Gradually the caves and the mountain where he dwelled became sacred.

413 Kovalevskii 1956, 146.

414 Venedikov 1995a, 176 and 215.

According to Herodotus, the most important oath of the Scythians was in the royal Hestias, and a false oath could incur a disability on the Scythian king.[415] "The royal hearth is like a root that ties the people to their land [...] the tree that grows from the deity is an old eastern symbol. We see it in the scene of the investiture in the famous knotted carpet from the Pazyryk burials (dated between the fifth and the third centuries BC and made by the Scythians in Kazakhstan, the Altai region—*Author's note*) [...] As can be seen, the goddess associated with the hearth and the tree as sources of life is the main deity of Scythia. This is why a false oath in the goddess of the royal hearth according to the Scythians could bring misfortunes to the tribe and harm the fertility of their land. And these disasters are symbolically encoded as an illness of the king [...] together with the belief that the usurpation of power, i.e. the violation of the lawful inheritance of the royal hearth, is the cause for diseases, infertility and discord".[416] Assuming that the Scythian king belonged to the caste of warriors by birth, and that the sacral power belonged to the priests, then according to D. Raevskii, "only the acquisition of both functions could give the king absolute power, and this power was achieved by means of a sacral marriage with the fire goddess Tabiti".[417]

The myth of Targitaus and the Serpent-Legged Goddess indicates that the Scythian kings were the mediators between the world of the living and the world of the dead. The descent of Heracles (Targitaus) into the Underworld (the cave) is done first by his horses and is preceded by a dream that equals "temporary death". According to traditional beliefs, horses provide the connection between the three worlds. In the Nart epos, the hero Soslan heads to the world of the dead on a horse.[418] In Bulgarian folklore the horse also belongs to the descending hero. According to one Christmas song from the Svishtov region, Dobri-Dan "with his faithful horse muddies the white Danube—he is going downwards (along the river or across the river, the water can be associated with the chthonic incarnation of the Great Goddess—*Author's note*), to go around his yard, which turns out to be the palace of the ruler of the

415 Raevskii 1977, 87. See Herodotus. *Histories* 4.68, in Dimitrov 1990, 27–28.

416 Marazov 1976, 48.

417 Raevskii 1977, 104.

418 Raevskii 1985, 41–42. The "Nart epos" is a name given to a series of tales about the Narts, the epic heroes of the Caucasus. The sagas were recorded during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Is it presumed that the epos initially belonged to the Ossetians (the descendants of the Alans in the Caucasus), but it was also known among other Caucasian peoples. See for instance Dumézil 1976 and 1965.

kingdom of the dead".[419] In a song from the Ruse region, "he is Dan with Danitsa (Dennitsa, the Morning Star), accompanied by lads and maidens. Apparently, in his role as the leader in initiation rites, he leads their souls to the realm of the dead".[420] The presence of Danitsa in this song is hardly coincidental.

The cult of the Celestial Maiden Goddess has survived for a long time in the Northern Black Sea region and especially in the Crimea. Already Herodotus used the name Maiden for the supreme deity of the Tauri.[421] Her images in Chersonesus can be related to the type of the Serpent-Legged Goddess. On a terracotta plate from the city, dated from the first to second century AD, she is depicted with a bull's head. The etymology of the name (Tauri) connects their origins with the bull. For this reason the Maiden is depicted on the obverse side of some Chersonesus coins, with the bull depicted on the reverse. This is a reflection of the belief that the Tauri stemmed from the marriage of the goddess and the bull. The Maiden of Chersonesus saved the city several times from military danger, and two sanctuaries claimed to have her sword. Thus, she resembled the warrior-maiden goddess Athena, and Tabiti probably also had a similar role.[422]

Strabo calls the supreme goddess of the Bosporan Kingdom, the lands of which were later inhabited by Bulgars and Khazars, Aphrodite Apatura.[423] The Celestial Aphrodite is mentioned by the name of Artimpasa by Herodotus as one of the three goddesses, worshipped by the Scythians.[424] Her name indicates a connection to the Iranian goddess of fertility and patron of newlyweds Arti. The cult of the goddess was also widespread among the population of Sogd where she was called Artivah (the ancient Iranian Arti Vahvi, meaning "the Good Arti").[425] According to Strabo, when some giants attacked the Bosporan Aphrodite, she called upon Heracles and hid in a cave, while the hero killed her foes. This legend bears a resemblance to the Serpent-Legged Goddess of Herodotus and her name Apatura ("quick water") resembles that of the Scythian Api ("water").[426]

In ancient times, the cult of Aphrodite (Astarte—the Semitic Aphrodite) was associated with the cult of Adonis. The mother of Adonis was the Assyrian

419 Kaloianov 1995, 49.
420 Kaloianov 1995, 49–50.
421 Herodotus. *Histories* 4.103, in Dimitrov 1990, 38.
422 Marazov 1976, 47.
423 Strabo. *Geografiia* 9.2,10, in Rusinov 2008.
424 Herodotus. *Histories* 4.59, in Dimitrov 1990, 25.
425 Abaev 1962, 449–450.
426 Raevskii 1977, 57; Marazov 1976, 51; See Strabo. *Geografiia*11.2,10, in Rusinov 2008.

princess Smyrna, who was impregnated by her father. The gods turned her into a tree that split and gave birth to Adonis. Aphrodite (the Assyro-Babylonian Ishtar) gave the child to the goddess of the Underworld Persephone. The two goddesses quarreled over Adonis and Zeus decided that he should spend the summers with Aphrodite, and the winters with Persephone.[427] The Phoenician kings of Paphos in Cyprus were considered priests—and lovers of Aphrodite. This way they personified Adonis, who they believed they stemmed from. As the divine lover of Adonis Aphrodite is identified with Venus[428] (the Morning Star). A similar belief is reflected in the Bulgarian song from the Ruse region, in which Dan and Danitsa lead the souls of the dead along the Danube River.

According to Herodotus, the Persians adopted the cult of the Celestial Aphrodite from the Assyrians and the Arabs.[429] He refers to the supreme goddess of the Persians (Iranians), Anahita. Like the Scythian Great Goddess (in the form of Api), she embodies the earth and water principles. Anahita lived on an island on the Ardvi River (Amu Darya). People also prayed to her for victory, which brings her closer to the Maiden.[430] The ancestors of the Sassanids were probably temple priests of Anahita; moreover, stone bas-reliefs from Sassanid Iran have been found, depicting the royal diadem being handed to the ruler by Mithra and Anahita.[431]

Also of interest are the Iranian beliefs, according to which Ahura Mazda and Ahriman were created from the primordial female element. In Iranian Manichaeism, the king of light (the Father of Greatness), who is identified

427 Venedikov 1995a, 74–75; Frazer 2006, 306 and 312; on the Sumerian origins of this motif, see Campbell 2005, 58–60.

428 Frazer 2006, 312 and 326.

429 Venedikov 1997, 161. See Herodotus. *Histories* 1.131, in Dimitrov 1986, 76–77. Of course, the cult of the female celestial deity existed among the Iranian peoples independently from the influence of the Mediterranean cultures. The Iranian cult of Anahita is depicted as a mix (an amalgam) of Iranian (also associated with the Indian Saraswati) and Middle Eastern traditions (Eliade 1987, 249; on Middle Asia, see for instance D'iakonova and Smirnova 1967). It is possible that these cults have arisen independently of one another, but their relation to the spread of the cult of the Neolithic Great Goddess is also apparent (see here, note 260).

430 Kliashtornyi 1964, 169; Kliashtornyi and Sultanov 2000, 23–25 and 46–47; Raevskii 1977, 46–47; Tolstov 1948b, 123.

431 Chobanov 2006, 30, 42, 44, and 55; Chobanov 2008, 61–62 and 82. Initially, Mithra and Anahita were mentioned as guardians of the Persian kings (except for Ahura Mazda) in the inscriptions of Artaxerxes II (404–357) (Shkoda 2001, 450; see also Eliade 1987, 249).

with Zurvan, is called both "big brother" and "big sister".[432] According to Iu. Stoianov, "In Manichaeism, the Mother of Life, who is preceded only by the Father of Greatness (Zurvan) in the Manichaean pantheon, is associated with the "mother" of Ohrmazd and Ahriman, who evolved into an independent deity figure in Zurvanian mythology".[433] The Armenian Pavlikians, who were accused of adhering to Zoroastrian customs, worshiped the Virgin Mary "not only as the mother of Jesus Christ, but also as "Celestial Jerusalem".[434]

In Tibetan religion Bon Ishtar, Astarte (Aphrodite) and Anahita are embodied by "the mother of the sphere Satrig Ersang". She was the cause of all prosperity that came at all times. She was the ruler of all three worlds (the Celestial one, the Terrestrial and the Infernal one) and was regarded as the mother of the whole world. She had a celestial palace of gold, where she sat on a throne, made of two huge lions. It was believed that Satrig Ersang dispersed darkness. Like Astarte, this brings her closer to Venus (the Morning Star). By her left side she held a mirror, perhaps an image of the Moon.[435] A goddess holding a mirror is often depicted in Scythian golden clasps. A young Scythian stands before her with a rhyton. This scene probably depicts the belief of the marriage of the Scythian king with Tabiti.[436]

The cult of Anahita is associated with fire.[437] Lions, panthers and tigers are the sacred animals of Ishtar-Anahita. A deity sitting on a lion with the inscription of "Nano" is depicted on the late Kushan coins of Huvishka. Ancient Khwarezm is known for the cult of a goddess bearing a royal crown and holding the symbols of the Sun and the Moon in her hands, flanked by a lion and a leopard.[438] The coins of the Khwarezmian Siyavushids contain the image

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432 Stoianov 2006b, 369; in Mithraism, Zurvan Akarana embodies infinite, all-consuming time. He lacks a name, sex or emotions. He is depicted with a lion's head and a body encircled by a snake. "He creates and destroys all things; he is the Lord and master of the four elements that compose the universe, he virtually unites in his person the power of all the gods, whom he alone has begotten" (Cumont 1999, 92–93). "The lion is symbolic of solar light, which is eternal; the serpent, of the rhythmic, circling round of the lunar tides of time, which never cease. Thus, the figure is precisely what its name teils: Zurvan Akarana, "Boundless Time", in which eternity and time are one, yet two" (Campbell 2005, 274).

433 Stoianov 2006b, 369.

434 Stoianov 2006b, 166–168.

435 Kuznetsov 1998, 98–99 and 175–176.

436 Raevskii 1985, 157.

437 Vishnevskaia and Rapoport 1979, 109.

438 Basilov 1998, 254–257.

of the goddess of victory Nike marrying the king. This scene is also depicted on Parthian coins from the first century BC, which are closely related to the Greco-Bactrian coins from the second century BC.[439] Murals from Panjakent (Sogd) from the fifth to the beginning of the sixth century show a goddess sitting on a lion throne or a throne with a Simurgh. During the sixth century, a four-handed goddess sitting on a dragon was depicted on top of them. A four-handed goddess, holding the symbols of the Sun and the Moon and sitting on a lion throne, can also be found on silver goblets made in Khwarezm. These goblets also contain the image of Mithra, kneeling before the goddess. This is a way of conveying that Mithra or the culture hero (for example, Rostam) and thus also the symbolical image of the king, are being guarded by the goddess.[440]

According to V. Darkevich, between the sixth and the seventh centuries, a "restoration of the archaic" occurred in Khwarezm and Sogd on a new basis. At the head of the Khwarezmian pantheon came the Great Goddess (Anahita) who had sovereignty. The Khwarezmian rulers who were the descendants of Siyavush (the male companion of the goddess) embodied the god of death and resurrection. In addition to ruling the Earth (the Middle World), the Khwarezmian goddess also had power over the celestial bodies (the Sun and the Moon) and "the realm of the dead". The goddess could bestow victory and was the patron of the cities of Khwarezm.[441]

The similarity between the Scythian and the Turkic pantheon is of interest as well. According to Scythian beliefs, Hestia was the chief deity, but also the Celestial Goddess with no Celestial God by her side, since he should have been Uranus and not Papai-Zeus who could also be her son. The Turkic goddess Umay is the female equivalent of Tengri, and is thus the Celestial Goddess and his wife. Like the Maiden, she was the patron of warriors, together with Tengri. But Umay was also the goddess of fertility and newborns; she embodied the maternal principle and was later known as proto-Mother. The

439 Tolsov 1948b, 147.

440 Belenitskii and Marshak 1976, 76–82; the presence of the four-handed goddess on the Khwarezmian goblets is sometimes interpreted as a manifestation of Indian influence. According to Darkevich 1976, 108, this image is part of the perception of the Great Goddess, irrelevant of the influences it was subjected to. During the sixth and seventh centuries, the goddess was widely depicted in Khwarezm, Sogd, Ustrushana and Eastern Turkestan. In the opinion of the scholar, this iconography is related to the Iranian Anahita who is also described as a thousand-armed goddess. In the case of the silver goblets, V. Darkevich assumes that the Khwarezmian toreutics from the sixth to seventh century were influenced by the image of Nana from the Kushan coins stemming from the second to third century, "and were inspired by Kushan and "Kushan-Sassanid" models".

441 Darkevich 1976, 109–112.

similarity between Tengri and Umay is shared by a third deity, mentioned in Turkic manuscripts—Iduk Yer-Sub ("the Sacred Earth-Water") who could be identified with the Scythian Api or Mother-Goddess.[442] Trying to understand the character of the goddess Umay, S. Kliashtornyi quotes S. Ivanov, according to whom various Turkic tribes upheld archaic notions about "the great creative and vital force that occupied the sky". This vital force was later personified by Umay.[443]

According to the Altaic peoples, Umay resided at Lake Milk "on top of the mountain that stood at the center of the Middle Earth, at the foot of the sacred tree that grew from the Navel of the Earth and Sky".[444] Lake Milk is regarded as the center of the eternal life-force of the Cosmos. In it Umay bathed and sated her thirst. However, Lake Milk is also the symbol of sacral purity,[445] manifested in a Celestial Goddess through her image as a Maiden. It is worth recalling that according to Greek mythology, Hera renewed her virginity by bathing in the waters of Kanathos. The notion of the tree, located near the lake on the mountain, is also of interest. It can be seen as similar to the domain of Diana Nemorensis. In the folklore of the Turko-Mongol peoples, the tree is the dwelling place and semantic substitute for the female deity, as the giver of life.[446] According to Turkic notions, the tree and the river are associated with the chthonic principle. It is presumed that the funeral of a tree corresponds to the belief about the journey of the souls of the dead down the river.[447]

Umay is also the goddess that carried the souls of the dead. Moreover, her cult is associated with fire (part of the notion about the tree and the sacred mountain seen as a cosmic axis and the river in the horizontal plane of the world) and she is called "Mother Fire".[448] The custom of the ancient Turks to bury their dead with their horses indicates the symbolic role of the horses (similar to that of the river and the tree) as intermediaries between the world of the living and the realm of the dead. And according to a Turkic legend, the Fire Mother rode a white and yellow horse.[449]

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442 Venedikov 1987, 253; Kliashtornyi 1984, 18–19; Kliashtornyi and Sultanov 2000, 157; L'vova, Oktiabr'skaia, Sagalaev, and Usmanova 1988, 20, 29–30; Potapov 1979, 73 and 77; Stoianov 2006a, 43.

443 Kliashtornyi 1984, 19.

444 L'vova, Oktiabr'skaia, Sagalaev, and Usmanova 1988, 123.

445 L'vova, Oktiabr'skaia, Sagalaev, and Usmanova 1988, 123 and 131.

446 L'vova, Oktiabr'skaia, Sagalaev, and Usmanova 1988, 127.

447 L'vova, Oktiabr'skaia, Sagalaev, and Usmanova 1988, 75.

448 Potapov 1979, 270 and 279–280; Aksenov 2002, 11–12 and 2004c, 208; Neikova 2006, 24–25.

449 Nestorov 1990, 72 and 88.

All the notions about the goddess discussed here stem from the beliefs in the Neolithic Celestial Goddess. She, or more precisely the female deities of the Sky and the Sun, are associated with the deity of fire and the hearth. In the Neolithic age, the Sun was depicted as a fiery woman that had arrived in the sky from the underworld.[450] The female image of the Sun was embodied by the Maiden in the form of a bride or daughter whose mother was the Celestial Goddess. She was considered the goddess of the Skies and the celestial waters, a giver of rain and fertility, but also a source and prime mover of life, death and illnesses. She was also responsible for poor crops and disasters. The goddess was associated with the funeral cult and the world beyond, being the patron of the dead. She had a dual nature and symbolized both Sky and Earth, winter and summer, life and death, good and evil.[451]

One of her symbols was the world tree, perhaps because she was regarded as a ruler of Nature. The world tree also reflects the motif of the prediction of human fates, since they depended on the Great Goddess. Trees with milky juices in their fruit or trunk were regarded as sacred—clearly, an allusion to the milk of the Great Mother of the World.[452] Humans died by the will of the goddess and the color white was associated with death. She was often also associated with red. Conversely, the white color symbolized the sky, while the red was a symbol for the underworld, the Paleolithic male deity. The combination between white and red also represents the bond between the masculine and the feminine (in various times and traditions white and red have been both male and female color symbols), between the underworld and the celestial one, which in one way or another were part of the image of the Great Goddess, not only in ancient times. This combination is also related to royal power, as was the case in ancient Iran. In Bulgarian tradition, red and white are associated with the "female" month of March and the martenitsa.[453]

The lack of written records does not allow a clear view on the cult of the goddess among the Bulgars. It is not possible (at least for the moment) to find out the name this goddess was given. The theory of D. Ovcharov, who calls the female deity of the Bulgars Umay, is based only on the fact that the Turks worshipped this goddess.[454] According to T. Chobanov, the phrase from the *Chatalar inscription* of the Bulgarian Kana Omurtag "until the Ticha flows"

450 Golan 1993, 32 and 178.

451 Golan 1993, 13–15, 42, and 139–140; see also Campbell 2005, 19; Campbell 2004, 47–49 and 140.

452 Golan 1993, 156.

453 See Stepanov 2003b, 59–67; Golan 1993, 44–45 and 172.

454 Stepanov 2003c, 72; cf. Ovcharov 1997, 23–25 and 147–159; see also Rashev 2008, 299–300.

could denote a female deity. He assumes that if the missing part of the inscription reads "until the sun shines", it is possible to look for a semantic connection with Mithra (sun) and Anahita (water). "The imposing similarity in the concepts of holiness and power" between the Bulgarian and the Persian ruling tradition[455] speaks in favor of such an interpretation.

It is presumed that the goddess, carried by an eagle, that is depicted on ewer no. 2 and probably on ewer no. 7 from the Nagy-Szent-Miklós Treasure, is the Iranian Anahita.[456] O. Minaeva stresses that "the symbolism of the motifs and the style of workmanship on the two ewers, as well as part of the treasure, indicate rather a Middle Asian environment".[457] One of the murals at Panjakent

455 Chobanov 2008, 96. There is also a somewhat unclear account that mentions "Bulgarians called Slavs". They worshipped a female statue and lived close to the Holy Mountain (Bozhilov 2008, 367). The text is from *The vitae of George III Hagiorite*, the hegumen of the Iviron monastery (1044–1056). Of particular interest is the description of the place, inhabited by this group of "Slavs". The place in question is remote and located in "an isolated desert, between fearsome peaks, and overgrown with oak forests" (see also the other accounts about these Bulgarians in Bozhilov 1995b, 16–18). With regard to the Bulgarian cult of the female deity, of special interest is the unresolved question as to why the classical image of the Gorgon Medusa can be found both on monuments of folk art (pictures on bricks and lead amulets) and those of the nobility (a bronze vessel from Preslav) in the time following Bulgaria's Christianization (See Rashev 2007b, 7–11). Still, it should be noted that the classical myth of Medusa contains the legacy of the ancient Neolithic Great Goddess. According to Campbell 2005, 37 and 163–165, the mythical context of the legend of Medusa, Poseidon and the heroism of Perseus includes the myths of the death and resurrection of the Moon king, as well as those of the ritual regicide. Also of importance is the fact that the Gorgon Medusa, depicted on the bronze vessel from Preslav, is flanked on both sides by a griffon, which ties this composition to the concept of the world tree (Vitlianov 1997, 340–341 and 353 fig. 1).

456 Mavrodinov 1959, 128; Vaklinov 1977, 149; Vaklinov and Vaklinova 1983, 10, 14, 30, and 46; Aladzhov 1999, 19–21. See also Minaeva 1988, 49–53. According to Ovcharov 1989, 433–434, the ewer no. 2 "does not simply contain a depiction of Anahita, but of her hypostasis with the Turkic (here—the Proto-Bulgarian) goddess Umay [...] the fusion of the two cults should have older roots and have occurred in the lands of Middle Asia, where the Proto-Bulgarians lived for a long time (after the second–third centuries) alongside such centers of Iranian culture as Khwarezm, Sogdiana and Bactria. The analysis of the female image from ewer no. 2 leads to a similar conclusion [...] Khwarezm was a center of distribution of the "naked Anahita" variety; the region is thought to be a center for the cult of Anahita in general [...] The scene with Anahita is an exceptional example of the combination between Turkic ceremonial and pictorial traditions and Iranian mythology and iconography".

457 Minaeva 1988, 53.

(the fifth to sixth centuries) contains an extremely similar image.[458] In the opinion of T. Teofilov, the images on the ewers depict the myth of the Garuda bird that carries the divine daughter Anahita up in the sky. The scholar believes that "the legend, depicted on the ewers from Nagy-Szent-Miklós, still retains its primary mythological distinctness and has no Hellenistic adaptation [...] the presentation of the legend has adhered to the main thematic version that has been preserved in the best, most accurate and most complete way on the territory of Middle Asia".[459]

In connection with the mission of bishop Israel to the Kingdom of the Huns in Dagestan in 682, M. Kalankatvatsi mentions that priests who opposed the felling of the sacred oak (!) of the supreme deity, the baghatur Aspandiat (Tengri Khan), were servants of Aphrodite.[460]

Many aspects of the image of Aspandiat, identified as the supreme deity of the Caucasian Huns, remain unclear. Firstly, it is noteworthy that there is no meaningful link between the cult of this Tengri Khan (Aspandiat) and the traditional Turkic Tengri (god of the Sky and the celestial sphere). The connection between Aspandiat and the culture hero as the precursor of rulers seems more logical, and on a semantic level and with regard to the cult of the Great Goddess he is the god-son of the goddess.[461] Also of importance is the presentation of Aspandiat as a baghatur. The cultural center of the Caucasian Huns is described as an oak forest. There, the oak of Aspandiat is the chief one, with the rest dedicated to other deities. His oak, however, is the "head and mother" of all the others, "a giver of life and all blessings". It is then quite natural that the special group of priests who tended the sacred trees were interpreted as servants of Aphrodite by M. Kalankatvatsi.[462] According to S. Kliashtornyi,

458 Belenitskii and Marshak 1976, 78.

459 Teofilov 2003, 375.

460 Movses Kalakantvatsi. *Istoriia strany Aluank* 2.51, in Smbatian 1984.

461 The root of the name Aspandiat (aspa) means "horse" and thus depicts the hero as a horseman (see Stepanov 1999a, 154); cf. the interpretation of the Madara Horseman as a culture hero, a generalized image of the ruler or as an image of Mithra (Stepanov 1999a, 150–155 and 2007, 44–52; cf. Ovcharov 1989, 437–438). See also the analysis of Neikova 2006, 153, in which Aspandiat (Tengri Khan) as a giant is compared with Chuvashian and Bulgarian concepts of the first man. According to Kaloianov 2003, 281, "Madara" was regarded as a "female mountain".

462 See also Gmyria 2008, 13 and 23. Trying to protect the sacred tree of Aspandiat, the priests specify (in the words of M. Kalankatvatsi) that through prayers and gifts to the tree the people were healed of diseases, the poor received aid, and with the help of the tree the people asked for rain and fertility during droughts, stopped heavy rains and restrained

the Aphrodite that the Dagestani Huns worshipped is identical to the Turkic Umay.[463] This is, however, only a presumption, since there is not enough evidence on the matter. With regard to the Iranian etymology of Aspandiat and Kuar (cf. the Iranian *xvar*, light), called "Hunnic deities" by M. Kalankatvatsi, this Aphrodite could also be Anahita.

Examining the burial rites of the Bulgars from the Severski Donets River region between the seventh and the ninth centuries (the use of wooden (oak) constructions), V. Aksenov assumes that they shared the belief that presented the nether world as a journey down a river. Each tree was regarded as a part of the world tree, and in Turkic mythology it is identified with a river. Along with this the tree symbolized the fire element, fire itself and its Lady—the cosmic axis or the Mother Goddess.[464]

Among the Alans, the oldest cult was that of the Mother Goddess. Between the sixth and the seventh centuries, it was replaced by the cult of a male deity that symbolized fertility and celestial fire. During the Late Middle Ages such a deity was the Ossetian god Alardy who was associated with celestial fire and fertility and originated from the older image of the Goddess.[465]

The cult of the Goddess survived long after the Alans. Evidence of this can be found in the Nart epos. There, the supreme female deity Satána is regarded as the guardian of the life force of the people. She was the ruler of the Narts and was sought for advice on various problems. Satána was also high priestess. When famine struck, she could feed everyone and her relationship with the gods was crucial for the well-being of the people. She armed her people and could predict their future with a mirror.[466] The image of the goddess is associated with both earth and water.[467] According to the Ossetians, she was born in a tomb by a dead mother who was the daughter of the ruler of the seas. Satána provided the link between earth and sky. "She comes into the world from the chthonic world and through her father is involved with the inhabitants of the heavens. Because of her special relations with both worlds, Satána ensures the well-being of the people on earth".[468]

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thunder-bearing clouds. The tree was the protector of the land (*Istoriia strany Aluank* 2.51, in Smbatian 1984).

463 Kliashtornyi 1984, 22 and 1998, 123; Kliashtornyi and Sultanov 2000, 162.

464 Aksenov 2002, 11–14.

465 Flerova 2001a, 23–27.

466 Pletneva 1998, 529–537.

467 Karpov 2001, 342.

468 Karpov 2001, 343.

The hero in the epos of the Karachays and Balkars (the neighbors of the Ossetians, descended from the Alans) Eriuzmek was taught wisdom by his wife Satána. The Adyghe-Abkhaz Satána-Guasha was an eternally young and beautiful woman. She endowed her youngest son Sosriqwe (whom she did not give birth to or breastfeed) with wit, cunning and the ability to see into the future and to influence nature and men. The Adyghe Satána was the embodiment of wisdom and beauty, a skilled judge, the companion of abundance and a mainstay in the fight against enemies. In some places in the epic the goddess is also presented as a Maiden Warrior—in particular, when she battles her future husband.[469]

With regard to the cult of the Great Goddess among the Alans, of particular interest is the account of Venantius Fortunatus from the second half of the sixth century, in which he lists the following people as worshippers of the Maiden: Ethiopians, Thracians, Arabs, Dacians, Alans, Persians and Britons. It is obvious that the Maiden here is not the Christian Virgin Mary.[470]

The composition in which the deity or the world tree is surrounded on both sides by two mirrored lions, horses, birds or other zoo- and anthropomorphic figures is often found on Saltovo amulets. The amulets with a protome of two-headed horses could be seen as depictions of camel or bird protomes. This motif has an analogy in a group of Ugrian earrings, found in some Saltovo settlements.[471] It is possible that an earlier local prototype is the basis of the image of the Great Goddess with a protome of animals, depicted on a group of fibulas from the Crimea and the Don Region that date from the sixth to the seventh century, i.e. the period when a large part of this region was part of Khan Kubrat's Great Bulgaria.[472] Also noteworthy is the fact that according to V. Flerova, the design, used by the Saltovo artisans, resembles the well-known type of depiction of the Serpent-Legged Goddess.[473] The fact that the animal protomes on the Saltovo amulets are turned away from the central figure and not towards it, prompts V. Flerova to interpret the scene is a manifestation of the "bipolar nature of the solar dynamic: the progressive and regressive halves of the cycle". It can refer to various deities from the pantheon with different

469 Karpov 2001, 338, 341, 344, and 346.

470 Maenhcen-Helfen 1973, 293–294.

471 Flerova 2001a, 43; see also Mikheev, 1982; Golubeva 1984; Aksenov 1998.

472 Flerova 2001a, 46–48.

473 Flerova 2001a, 47.

zoomorphic companions.[474] D. Dudko presumes that this depiction represents a goddess sitting on two horses or birds.[475]

Examining the images of a tree and deer on a pottery series, dated from the sixth to seventh century and found in the Urtseki hillfort in Dagestan, L. Gmyria accepts the theory of A. Golan that they depict "the Holy Triad", in which the tree is the symbol of the Great Goddess.[476] According to S. Tolstov, the early form of the Khwarezmian tamgas consists of a simplified "image of a female figure with the tendency of transforming into a tree, merged with two horse protomes with their heads bent outward".[477] He sees the composition of a woman with horses (horsemen) as a central politico-religious symbol of the Sarmatian tribes.[478] From this point of view, the assumption of V. Flerova that the bident and trident signs, often found in Khazaria, could be graphically similar to the above-cited composition, seems logical. They resemble an anthropomorphic figure with raised arms—not the whole composition, clearly, but only the central part of it. These symbols could also be interpreted as a depiction of a supreme deity. Such symbols have been found on clasps from complexes associated with Great Bulgaria, but the most developed tamga system of bident and trident symbols is found in Sassanid Iran. It could be assumed that the Saltovo tamgas are in fact a simplified version of the Iranian ones, which symbolize sacralized sovereignty and are associated with temple workers. As was already mentioned, the trident and bident were known as symbols of the ruling family among many peoples in Eurasia and in particular (in the preceding period) among the Khwarezmian Siyavushids and the dynasty of Bosporan kings (first to third century). The tamgas from the Sogd region, of

474 Flerova 2001a, 63–64; according to Aksenov 1998, 8, "among many peoples, depictions of horses with bodies, curved in opposing directions, or only their heads were drawn on objects possessed by women, since they were associated with the cult of the fertility goddess, the mother of all living things".

475 Dudko 2004, 37–40.

476 Gmyria 2008, 22. A certain similarity with the Dagestan pottery images of the world tree can be found in the Oghuz molded pottery from the settlement near Samosdelka (probably Itil?), dated from the tenth to the eleventh century (Gmyria 2008, 26). The hillfort near Urtseki is one of the possible locations of the city of Varachan, described in the sources as an administrative and religious center of the Caucasian Huns. On the Holy Triad, see Golan 1993, 159–164.

477 Tolsov 1948a, 185.

478 Tolsov 1948a, 186.

the Kushans and the Hephthalites, are similar.[479] According to P. Georgiev, the Bosporan tamgas "are graphic diagrams of the divine investiture and divine nature of kingship and the king himself".[480] Thus, the scene on a plate from a head-dress depicts the goddess Nike wedding the ruler who is sitting on a horse. Two plates from the Taman Peninsula, dating from the second to third century, have the same motif, but the ruler in them is replaced by a trident.[481]

In accordance with the logic that V. Flerova follows, unlike the bidents from the Don Region, the Bulgar bident (the ypsilon with two hastae) depicts the whole compositions (with the hastae).[482] It is quite impossible to relay all the different views on the meaning of this symbol here.[483] P. Petrova associates the ypsilon with the ancient Indian concept of the ancestor-twins holding the trunk of the sacred tree. This symbol represented the concept of *power* and became the sign of their exclusive right to rule over the lives and fates of the people.[484] In her opinion, the combination of the ypsilon and the two hastae can be interpreted as: "1) an ideogram of the divine twins (ancestors); 2) written characters for "God"; 3) written characters denoting divine power, be it heavenly or khan's (kingly)".[485]

The symbol could also be a combination of the notions of the divine twins with the ones of the Great Goddess. In the Ossetian epos, the ancestor of the Narts is a she-wolf (wolf) that gave birth to twins, and in Bulgarian Christmas songs a deer leads two twin brothers to their future wives.[486] V. Flerova assumes

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479 Flerova 2001a, 43 and 53–56; Poluboiarinova 1981, 169 and 177–178; Tolsov 1948a, 184–186. The existence of similarities between the culture of the Bulgars and the Bosporan Kingdom, along with the fact that the Bulgars lived on its lands for several centuries, requires more attention to be paid to the Bosporan influence on Bulgar culture (see Stanev 2005; Pritsak 2006, 19).

480 Georgiev 1997, 54.

481 Georgiev 1997, 54; according to Georgiev 1997, 51–52 and 57, the Bosporan system of royal symbols was influenced by (or rather, merged with) the Hellenic trident of Poseidon. Poseidon himself is regarded as the guardian of the Bosporan state from the fourth century BC onwards. On the archaic motifs in the classical myth of Poseidon (the god with a trident) and the connection with Neolithic notions, see Campbell 2005, 58ff.

482 Flerova 2001a, 60.

483 See for instance Aladzhov 1999, 30; Stepanov 2000, 133–143; Georgiev 1996; Rashev 1992; Popkonstantinov 1997.

484 Petrova 1990, 40–41; the text refers to the Ashvini twins. In Indian mythology they unite various opposites and are identified with "sky and earth, eternity and time, priest and king, as the two halves of one Spiritual person" (Campbell 2005, 275).

485 Petrova 1990, 42.

486 Golan 1993, 197; Iordanov 1996a, 34. In the Nart epos, Dzerassa, the daughter of the Ruler of the seas (and the mother of Satána) gives birth to twins, one of whom later marries Satána (Dumézil 1976, 235).

that the symbol of the bident is associated with the Great Goddess. In her opinion, to distinguish the male from the female character "which are almost indistinguishable not so much among the symbols, but in the very persona of the sacral king" is extremely difficult. In the image of the god of fertility—the sacral king—and the priest the male and female principles are often merged.[487]

The concept of the divine ancestor-twins (Demiurges brothers) is part of the mythology of various Turkic, Iranian and Ugrian peoples, where they are opposed to one another as the rulers of the Upper and Lower Worlds.[488] For the Ob-Ugrian people they are Numi-Torum and Kuly-Otir. The main hero of the Ob-Ugrian mythology, however, is Ekva-Pygris, who is depicted as a goose or rabbit and is the son of the goose Kaltas. He is "sent from the sky to the earth to rule the people".[489] Among the Turks this belief is embodied in the images of Erlik and Ulgen. Erlik, in the form of a duck, took the first land under water.[490]

Similar ideas can be found in the mythological images of the Georgian Queen Tamar (1184–1207) and her sister. Iu. Karpov compares the two sisters with the description of a pair of Georgian kings from an earlier age. "As a form of government, the dual kingship inferred not so much the antagonism of the rulers, as their complementarity that probably stemmed from the socio-cultural and mythological phenomenon of duality, reflected on a political plane".[491] According to Georgian beliefs, Queen Tamar is not dead, but sleeping and will wake to help her people when needed.[492]

The divine twin brothers appear in the mythology of most dualistic religious systems. The Cathars, for example, developed the concept of them into two opposing male-female pairs. They express the view that "all existing things are ruled by the antagonism between pairs with similar structures, but opposite natures".[493]

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487 Flerova 2001a, 126.

488 Meletinskii 1976, 187; Stoianov 2006b, 173–183; Karpov 2001, 361.

489 Meletinskii 1976, 187.

490 L'vova, Oktiabr'skaia, Sagalaev, and Usmanova 1988, 98. A similar storyline can be found in some Bulgarian folk tales. See Ivanov 1970, 327–382.

491 Karpov 2001, 349–361.

492 Karpov 2001, 363; similar to the legend of Marko who did not die, but lives a solitary life somewhere on a high mountain or hidden in a deep cave and will return to deliver his people (Arnaudov 1996, 530–531). On the semantic link between Marko and Mara, see Stepanov 2007, 46–49.

493 Stoianov 2006b, 370–371. On the saint twins in Bulgarian folklore who represent specific kinds of holy triads of saints, uniting the male and female principle, see Popov 1991 and 2008. Of particular interest is St. Todor who unites the male and female principle (he is androgynous by nature and has a female incarnation—St. Todorichka). St. Todor is a mediator between the two worlds. He arrives on a white horse from the nether world of

It can be assumed with good reason that in Bulgaria the goddess was associated with the ruling dynasty. The myth of the foundling child has similar meaning. This child is usually raised by an animal (a she-wolf, doe, bear, etc.), which may be a reincarnation of the Great Goddess.[494] Iv. Venedikov assumed that the story of Ispor, carried in a basket for three years that was mentioned in the *Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle* shares the same motif;[495] however, he later abandoned this theory.[496] The tale of the foundling child (the ruler of the Bulgars) that was miraculously saved by a doe can be also found in a Lithuanian chronicle.[497] This account is of particular importance, given the view of P. Dobrev that the name *Avitokhol* could be translated as "Doe Child".[498] According to Ts. Stepanov, the doe could be an incarnation of the Great Goddess and "could have played the role of leader and ancestor—not unlike the wolf, regarded as the ancestor of the Turkic peoples".[499]

Directly related to the topic is the legend, told by Procopius of Caesarea, about a deer that was hunted by the brothers Utigur and Kutrigur, that showed them a flow path through the Sea of Azov, after which Kutrigur settled on the other side. This storyline is widespread among many peoples in Steppe Eurasia. The doe is apparently a zoomorphic image of both the future wife of Kutrigur and the supreme female deity. The goddess—as a wife or mother—

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the dead (from graveyards), with the white color symbolizing the concept of the underworld. In some places he is worshipped as a saint of hailstorms. He is the patron of brides and births (this is related to the chthonic nature of his image) (Popov 1991, 83–111). "Wintry Saint Todor is a fearsome mythical horseman [. . .] he is a kind of proto-creator who establishes the new cosmic order and marks the beginning of yet another natural and social cycle. By transforming chaos into cosmos, the saint banishes winter and death, inseminates the earth himself or with the hooves of his magical horse and disappears again in the celestial or underground kingdom of ancestors" (Popov 1991, 110–111). According to Popov 1991, 99, the ritualism of the St. Todor celebrations originates from the (Proto-) Bulgarian pagan tradition.

494 Stepanov 1999b, 56 and 64; Iordanov 1995, 36.

495 Venedikov 1995a, 67ff; the exact words are "a child, carried in a basket for three years" with the word *basket* being one of the possible interpretations. The other one is *cow* and is the more plausible translation in Mollov's opinion (Mollov 1997, 34). According to Rashev 2008, 317, the version "in a basket" should be rejected in favor of "in a cow". The account from the chronicle shall be examined later on from this point of view.

496 Venedikov 1995b, 230–232.

497 Dobrev 1995, 59–60; Stepanov 1999b, 56.

498 Dobrev 1995, 61; see also Stepanov 1999b, 57–58.

499 Stepanov 1999a, 40. The Magyars had a similar legend. According to it, Hunor and Magor (the ancestors of the Huns and Magyars) were led by a deer across Meotida (Sea of Azov). See Gyóni 2007, 34–43. Georgieva 1993, 48–50 sees the deer in Bulgarian folklore as a semantic equivalent of the world tree.

who raises the hero, legitimizes the ruler's power (as given from the sky), as well as the power of the dynasty.[500] This motif is preserved in Bulgarian folklore in the tale of two brothers (Igril and Bogril) who pursue a stag that turns into a pretty girl. One of the brothers stays with her while the other one goes back. In a Bulgarian song the hero hunts two hinds which turn into maidens.[501] The *Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle* mentions that king Ispor was carried three years in a cow. According to ancient beliefs, during migrations the cow played a role similar to that of the doe.[502] In R. Rashev's opinion, "Asparukh is born by the Cow-Goddess in order to obtain legitimacy for his functions as ruler".[503]

This motif can be found several times in the Nart epos. The Ossetian hero Hamiz pursues a white rabbit that turns out to be the daughter of a water deity, after whish he marries her. During the wedding games Satána turns into a fox. The main hero of the Ossetian epos Soslan pursues a deer that is an incarnation of the goddess Atsirukhs (Divine Light), whom he later marries.[504] Soslan and Atsirukhs are associated with solar nature. In Alano-Ossetian mythology Soslan (an analogy of the Scythian Colaxais) is a great demigod and culture hero who is endowed with sacred gifts from the sky, possesses the striking features of a deity of the dying and resurrecting nature, is a giver of rain, etc. And if Soslan is an analogy of Colaxais, then Atsirukhs should be the equivalent of Tabiti.[505]

Similar notions also exist among the Turkic-speaking peoples of Middle Asia. Oghuz Khagan was conceived by a ray of light that "illuminated the eyes of Ay Khagan". A maiden that was within the ray of light gave birth to his sons. The Salar-Karamanians, a Turkmen tribe that migrated from Samarkand to China in the fourteenth century, had a legend of three brothers who met three doves. When they burned their feathers, the doves turned into women. One was called Gun Ana (Sun Mother), the second was Ay Ana (Moon Mother), and the third was Yutlus Ana (Star Mother). According to Kh. Korogly, the image of Ay Ana is associated with that of Ay Khagan, the mother of Oghuz (as a celestial woman and Moon queen).[506]

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500 Iordanov 1995, 34–35 and 1996a, 24; Stepanov 1999b, 64 and 1999a, 52; Juhas 1985, 405, 421, 424, and 426; Mollov 1997, 35 also sees the doe as a reincarnation of the Great Goddess.

501 Juhas 1985, 388–389 and 434–435.

502 Iordanov 1996a, 25 and 33.

503 Rashev 2008, 318; one of the oldest images of the Great Goddess is a cow (dating from the Neolithic era) which is associated with the image of the male deity as a bull. In *Rigveda* the goddess Aditi, mother of Mithra, Varuna and Indra, is a cow (Campbell 2004, 47–49 and 75).

504 Raevskii 1985, 62; Iatsenko 2000, 98–99; Pletneva 1998.

505 Iatsenko 2000, 101–102.

506 Korogly 1976, 39, 42–43, and 102.

In Bulgarian folklore, the relations between the hero, the hero-maiden and the woodland nymph *samodiva* are manifested in a specific way. The hero-maiden is always the opponent of the hero. She is looking for a match (suitor) who can win her through a battle.[507] The *samodiva* is often a foster mother to the hero and fights on his side. In Pl. Bochkov's opinion, "the *samodiva* replaces the mother of the hero by being the ruler of all that is wild, wet, chthonic, serpent-like . . ., forestal . . ., and of the womb, i.e. "motherly", "hero-birthing". And in this sense the equality between the *samodiva* and the mother (foster mother) seems completely logical".[508] Two female figures stand out in Bulgarian folklore—a celestial one, of the hero-maiden (the maiden), and a chthonic one (the *samodiva*), the mother of the hero and culture hero. These two figures are not clearly distinguished, since the *samodiva* can also enter into marriage. Moreover, her chosen one cannot reject her, since in that case she may harm him. A marriage to a *samodiva* socially elevates the groom[509] (not unlike Sargon, made king by the love of Ishtar). According to Bulgarian beliefs, "the *samodiva* rides a *sur* (light-grey) deer, reined with snakes, and carries a bow and arrows".[510] For the steppe peoples, the bow and arrows are symbols of the Great Goddess.[511]

According to another Bulgarian motif, three *zmei*-maidens bathed in the Kuninsko Lake in the form of golden-winged ducks, the hero (Stoian) robbed one of them of her magical objects to make her become his wife. This motif is part of the notion of the *samodiva*-wife.[512] The image of the water bird (which is also found on Saltovo amulets) is a symbol of power over the earthly world (birds of prey symbolize the celestial one). But as birds that can both fly,

507 Bochkov 1994, 26; Venedikov 1987, 45.

508 Bochkov 1994, 27–28; in direct relation to the *samodiva*-mother is the belief that heroes get their strength by suckling on a *samodiva* (Georgieva 1993, 148).

509 Kaloianov 1995, 28.

510 Georgieva 1993, 144; the meaning of the word *sur* (light-grey) can also be sought in the Indo-Iranian *surija, surva*—sun, sky (Stepanov 1999a, 53).

511 Moroz 1989; Stanilov 1981. The bow and arrow are symbols of kingship in many cultures and especially among the steppe peoples (the ancient Aryans, the Scythians, Sarmatians, Huns, the Turks and the Mongols). As a symbol of power, the bow is semantically related to the Great Goddess who blesses the ruler and guarantees victory in war. Thus, even in ancient Assyria, the worshipped by the Assyrian kings Ishtar was often depicted with a bow. The concept of power, personified by the goddess or the bow, is also found on various sets of Parthian coins. On them, the victorious ruler is either sitting on a throne next to a goddess that is handing him a wreath, or is depicted alone, holding a bow (see Harmatta 1951, 107–149).

512 Kaloianov 1995, 29; in Bulgarian traditional songs the *zmei*-woman is closely related to the *samodiva* or is a version of her (Georgieva 1993, 111).

swim and dive underwater they are also creatures that provide a link between worlds. It is therefore quite logical that in Scythia they were regarded as a symbol of kingship.[513] According to O. Minaeva, "the symbolism of water birds in Indo-European mythology is associated with the cult of Anahita and Saraswati and with the idea of fertility in general".[514] On the other hand, in (Volga) Bulgar archaeological finds, as well as in the folkloric and ethnographic materials of the peoples, inhabiting the Middle Volga Region, the duck symbolizes the sun and the sky element. The duck is one of the most widespread birds in Tatar folklore. Usually, it is of pure gold or pearl and symbolizes the sun. Baptized Tatars regarded the white duck as a sacrificial bird dedicated to the sun.[515]

The relation of the *zmei*-maidens from the Kuninsko Lake to earthly power is also evident from the legend about "the last battle against the Turks, in which a band of 40 maidens died, led by Kuna Queen".[516] The hero (Marko) acquires supernatural powers after drinking milk from a she-*zmei*. And "only one born from a snake can be a *zmei*-fighter".[517] In Bulgarian folklore, the hero-child is born by a mother that conceives without a man,[518] and the "maiden, sick from "*zmei* love", gives birth to a child in the house of her suitor, a cave atop a mountain".[519]

Of particular importance in Bulgarian folklore is the divine family. According to it, the Sun and the Crescent Moon are brothers (as in the works of John Exarch) whose mother lives in the sky. It could be presumed that the mother of the Sun embodies the goddess of fertility. The Sun is depicted as a fair arbiter and a patron of fertility. It possesses magical powers and cures childlessness. The Sun has also a sister who races with a hero on horseback.[520] Of particular interest is also the very old Bulgarian notion that the Sun has no father. It is no accident that according to traditional beliefs it is a buffalo-calf, a calf.[521]

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513 Raevskii 1977, 60; Flerova 2001a, 50.

514 Minaeva 1988, 50.

515 Davletshin 1990, 48.

516 Kaloianov 2003, 302.

517 Bochkov 1994, 39–40.

518 Venedikov 1987, 177.

519 Kaloianov 1995, 32.

520 Venedikov 1987, 258, 265–266, 274, 283, and 390; Venedikov 1997, 120, 124, 135, and 139–140. See also Kaloianov 2000, 62–84. According to Bulgarian beliefs, the Crescent Moon (*Mesets*) has also a female image (*Mesechina*) and as such is sister to the Sun. It is depicted as a cow (Georgieva 1993, 19 and 25–26). On the androgynous nature of the Moon (called *Marta, Mara mesechina*) as an image of the Great Goddess and its relation to Marko, see Stepanov 2007, 46–47. See also Kaloianov 1996, 147–151.

521 Georgieva 1993, 19, 25, and 28.

Sacral kingship in Eurasia and especially sacral regicide are incomprehensible without the cult of the Great Goddess. The supreme female deity and strong female power constitute an indispensable part of the steppe peoples' tradition. They have also been preserved in medieval concepts of the origin of kingship. The symbol that indicates the existence of the cult of the goddess in Khazaria is the trident. Accounts from the seventh century regarding the Caucasian Huns also speak of this.

It is unclear whether the cult of the goddess in Khazaria had the same semantic content as in Khwarezm or in the Bosporan Kingdom. Neither is it clear whether it remained unchanged until the tenth century. However, the cult of the goddess defined the dual kingship and the stronger sacralization of one of the rulers. The androgyny and the male/female features of the "sons of the Goddess" (both the divine characters and the kings) help in clarifying the authority of the Khazar khagan. He probably personified the "female" features of power. The khagan was a mediator between worlds as an incarnation of the world tree. He was responsible for the fertility and the existence of the world.

In their core the notions of power in Bulgaria and Khazaria lead to the steppe and Middle Asian tradition.[522] For the Bulgars and Alans in the khaganate these ideas were not "foreign", but a part of their understanding of the world order. The Khazar dual kingship should not be construed from the Judaization, since the pagan notions in this regard are evident and can explain the dual kingdom. These notions suggest a mixed development and do not always lead to the full sacralization of the supreme ruler, the way the Khazar khagan is described in Eastern sources. Assuming that such notions were also dominant in Bulgaria prior to 865, the difference is evident. In this regard the Khazar Khaganate shows a development which could have been determined by the views of the Khazars themselves.

There is no evidence of a disruption between the Khazar nobility and the population of the khaganate after the conversion to Judaism. On the contrary, the sacralization of the person of the khagan was most probably reinforced. Problems concerning the legitimacy of the khagan and the respect for his authority arose mainly from communities of converts to Islam or Christianity with an autonomous or semiautonomous status (for example, Volga Bulgaria and Alania).

522 See for instance Stepanov 1999a, 2005a and 2005b; Golden 2003; Pritsak 1981b.

CHAPTER 2

The Pechenegs in Khazar History: The Late Ninth and Tenth Centuries

When historians cite the Pecheneg invasion as the reason for the weakening of the Khazar Khaganate, they usually mean the destruction of the Saltovo monuments and the demise of this culture. This, however, refers mainly to the Western lands of the khaganate—the steppe and forest-steppe zones of the Northern Black Sea region, the Crimean and the Taman Peninsulas. There is no evidence of any looting or destruction having affected the whole of Khazaria. On the other hand, a huge swath of land containing settlements of the Bulgar version of the Saltovo culture in the steppe zone and the Bulgaro-Alanian one in the forest-steppe one is considered to be completely ravaged. But no one knows whether all of the destruction was caused by the Pechenegs and when it happened exactly. The Don Region is usually regarded as an integral part of the Khazar Khaganate. The consequences of the Pecheneg invasion are important for the clarification of the Khazar influence there. Sources tell of the existence of a "Black Bulgaria" and "Black Bulgars" in the Don Region during the tenth century. It is therefore important to understand not only whether they were a part of the khaganate, but also why their contemporaries mentioned them as a significant political force, since the Bulgar settlements should have been overrun by the Pechenegs and their inhabitants should have fled, have been killed or have been subjected by them.

In the middle of the ninth century, the Pechenegs occupied the steppes between the Volga and Ural. The records about their conflicts with the Khazars and Magyars who occupied Levedia, the steppe zone between the Don and the Dnieper, date from that period. In 889, the Khazars, allied with the Oghuz, whose territory began at the Ural River in the east, managed to defeat the Pechenegs and push them westward, to the Black Sea region steppes.[1] According to the Byzantine emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus, who is one of the major sources for these events, after the defeat some of the Pechenegs remained in their old lands, and those that did not submit to the Oghuz, defeated the Magyars. The Magyars were forced to migrate westward of the Dnieper and

1 Artamonov 1962, 349; Pletneva 1976, 63; Gumilev 1997, 180; Pritsak 1981b, no. 10, 8–11; Golden 2003, no. 1, 63–66; see also Shusharin 1961.

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the Pechenegs took over their lands,[2] or in other words, the steppes between the Don and the Dnieper. At the same time, the Khazar Khaganate retained its influence over the Magyars.[3] It can be assumed that the Pecheneg invasion was most devastating for the Magyars who dwelled in the steppe west from the Bulgar settlements and fortresses (the Don and the Severski Donets).

It is not known how the Pecheneg tribes moved through the lands of the Khazar Khaganate west of the Volga River. Perhaps this process was controlled to some extent by the Khazar rulers.[4] The Bulgaro-Alanian territory along the Severski Donets and the Lower Don river valleys did not have a typical steppe appearance. This land was hilly, cut through by river valleys, the slopes of which had significant forest vegetation for a steppe. Initially, it was of interest to the Pechenegs only in the extent in which it could provide them with the necessary agricultural products. The Saltovo settlements stood aside from the steppe territory inhabited by the Magyars. During their pursuit of the Magyars the Pechenegs could have simply passed through a territory inhabited by Bulgars, most probably along the lower reaches of the Don, without ravaging all of it. It is surmised that it was precisely then, at the end of the ninth century, that Phanagoria was destroyed (no relics from the tenth century have been found in the city).[5] Archaeological excavations from the past few years however indicate that the city was abandoned at the beginning of the tenth century as a result of the silting up of the harbor and the flooding of the neighborhoods adjacent to the sea.[6]

A significant consequence of the Pecheneg invasion is considered to be the beginning of the gradual migration of Bulgars from the steppe to the forest-steppe zone of the Donets and the Don rivers. At that time, a revival of the nomadic way of life began in the steppes.[7] The Bulgar migration was, however, a lengthy process which lasted at least until the middle of the tenth century. At the time, the majority of the population in the steppes to the north of the

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2 Konstantin Bagrianorodnyi. *Ob upravlenii imperiei*, ch. 37 and 38, in Litavrin and Novosel'tsev 1989, 157 and 159.

3 Dimitrov, 1998, 28; Artamonov 1962, 344–346; see also Pritsak 1981b, no. 5, 17–30; for relations between the Khazars and Magyars, see especially Howard-Johnston 2007.

4 This is something Howard-Johnston 2007, 188–190 particularly insists on.

5 Pletneva 1967, 48.

6 Sorochan 2004, 119. Today, the central part of Phanagoria, where the public and market centers were once situated (circa 15–17 hectares), is completely submerged under water (Sorochan 2004, 119). In her last works, S. Pletneva also finds such a proposition plausible, although she does not completely exclude the possibility that the city was abandoned due to the danger of some "external" attacks (Pletneva 2002, 111 and 2003, 183).

7 Mikheev 1985, 99; Pletneva, 1981a, 17.

Sea of Azov was still Bulgar which is evident from its anthropological traits and burial rites.[8] It is possible that a part of these Bulgars gradually fell, to some extent, into submission to the Pechenegs.

In fact, our knowledge of the consequences of the Pecheneg invasion depends primarily on archaeological research. There is not enough information on the fortresses, settlements and necropoles of the Saltovo culture to reveal the time of their abandonment or plunder. There are a few reasonably well studied complexes of the Saltovo culture in the Severski Donets and the Don region[9] which to some extent help to determine more precisely the appearance of the Saltovo settlements during the tenth century.

M. Artamonov consents that the Bulgars and Alans that inhabited the forest-steppe zones along the Don and the Donets were allies of the Pechenegs when those appeared north of the Black Sea. This is why their settlements were destroyed by the Khazars. M. Artamonov opposes S. Pletneva's assertion that the Pechenegs took over the lands of the Bulgars and Alans who were banished and massacred by them.[10] Thus, even back in the 1960s two of the important conclusions of S. Pletneva were questioned. According to M. Artamonov, the Lower Don (Bulgar) steppe version of the Saltovo culture "which also included settlements in the Sarkel area, as well as Sarkel itself [...] ceased to exist only after the downfall of the Khazar kingdom during Sviatoslav's rule".[11]

L. Gumilev supports the conclusion that during their migration the Pechenegs did not cause serious damage. In the 1960s he associates the Pecheneg invasion with climate warming from the late ninth century. At that time, "nomads passed through the withering steppes, driven by hunger and thirst. They moved in small groups, remaining elusive for the mercenary guards of the Khazar rulers. Their troops were too weak to conquer cities or to invade the inhabited delta (of the Volga—*Author's note*), but they blocked the

8 Pletneva 1967, 99; Artamonov 1962, 358.

9 The information published up till now is insignificant in view of all the settlements and fortresses of the Saltovo culture. On this, see Pletneva 1999.

10 Artamonov 1962, 357–358; in 1958 M. Artamonov presumes that the arrival of the Pechenegs in the steppes north of the Black Sea region had disastrous consequences for the bearers of the Saltovo culture (not a word is said about its demise by the hands of the Khazars). But this generally happened "back during the tenth century". He accepts as possible that part of the Saltovians could have returned to a nomad way of life and merged with the Pechenegs (Artamonov 1958, 82–83).

11 Artamonov 1962, 358. In 1935, however, M. Artamonov is much more categorical. In his opinion, the tenth century was the time of the greatest heyday of the Tsimliansk region as a whole, with the majority of settlements along the Don and along the border with the forest-steppe region disappearing by the eleventh century. (Artamonov 1935).

Khazars and *de facto* became rulers of the steppes".[12] The effect of the climate changes was weaker at the western end of the Great Steppe, along the shores of the Dnieper, Donets and the Don. "The Pechenegs, who sneaked in the Dnieper Region, restored their herds there, as well as their gardens and with that their military power which allowed them independence".[13]

According to V. Mikheev, the Pechenegs destroyed the hillfort near Maiaki-Tsarino (on the Severski-Donets) at the end of the ninth century. It was later rebuilt, but during the tenth century it lost its importance as a major economic centre. The same thing happened with the Sidorovo hillfort, located right next to Maiaki.[14] This theory is, however, unacceptable in view of the recent results from archaeological excavations that show that the heyday of the Sidorovo hillfort was during the tenth century, and the decline of Maiaki-Tsarino cannot be linked solely to the Pechenegs. According to E. Kravchenko, by the end of the ninth century the majority of the population of Maiaki had migrated to the territory of the Sidorovo archaeological complex, thus sparking its heyday.[15]

Over time, S. Pletneva also changes her opinion. In 1976 she believes that in the mid-tenth century the Pechenegs ruled over all of the steppe zone which was not part of the Khazar Khaganate even nominally.[16] The same year, together with A. Nikolaenko she publishes an article on the Volokonovka complex in which she asserts that the majority of the Saltovo settlements were destroyed by the Pecheneg invasion, but primarily in the steppe zone (and not the forest-steppe one).[17] In 1980, S. Pletneva presumes that almost all of the seaside towns on the Crimean and the Taman Peninsulas (except Phanagoria) were rebuilt and replenished with refugees from the steppes as well as with Pechenegs.[18]

The views on the ending date of the Saltovo culture become even more contradictory in the following years. In the publication, official for Soviet archaeology, "The Archaeology of USSR, Volume 18. The Steppes of Eurasia in the Middle Ages" (Moscow, 1981), S. Pletneva, while rejecting the previous upper date (the end of the ninth—the very beginning of the tenth century), writes: "It should

12 Gumilev 2003, 114.

13 Gumilev 1997, 212.

14 Mikheev 1985, 23–24.

15 Kravchenko 2004, 260; Kravchenko 2007, 179 and 195. The Sidorovo complex is the largest along the Severski Donets and occupies an area of about 120 hectares (Kravchenko 2007, 194).

16 Pletneva 1976, 65.

17 Pletneva and Nikolaenko 1976, 293 and 297–298.

18 Pletneva 1980, 36.

be borne in mind that for various settlements life went on until the second half of the tenth century, and in some places, even until its end",[19] after which she goes on to mention several such settlements. Probably in order not to leave a "wrong" impression, she specifies that in the mid-tenth century the Pechenegs "took control over the whole steppe, ravaged all the sedentary settlements and many Khazar cities in the steppe and forest-steppe zones. The size of Khazaria shrunk to that of a small [. . .] khanate, situated between the Don, Volga, Terek and the Manich, i.e. more or less to the territory of today's Stavropol Krai".[20] It is obvious that the scope of the Khazar influence during the tenth century should not be regarded as big (according to the requirements, imposed upon official Soviet science). It is also obvious that the territory between the mentioned rivers is considerably larger than "the Stavropol Krai".

S. Pletneva's study of the Dmitrievka archaeological complex (located in the outermost northwestern reaches of the Saltovo culture) from 1989 is quite interesting. The essential thing about this complex is that it was not plundered, but was abandoned voluntarily. S. Pletneva assumes that this was a result from the Pecheneg invasion. "However, the date of the Pecheneg invasion was quite "prolonged" over time. The Pechenegs invaded the Don steppes, according to Constantine Porphyrogenitus, during the 890s, and the destruction of the steppe settlements and their abandonment by the population lasted considerably longer—throughout the whole first quarter of the tenth century, and along the Lower Don—even until the second half of the tenth century".[21]

Ten years later S. Pletneva and A. Vinnikov published a joint study on the Maiaki settlement (located on the other, northeastern end of the Saltovo culture). It was inhabited for a longer period of time than the Dmitrievka one and its economic boom lasted until the second half of the ninth century and even during the first half of the tenth century.[22] In the study it is generalized that the settlements in the forest-steppe zone existed some unknown time after the Pecheneg invasion, even though they were cut off from the central khaganate lands which also deteriorated, left without a commercial and cultural exchange.[23]

In 1997, S. Pletneva writes that "after the invasion of the Pechenegs, who swept through the steppes like a hurricane, life was still preserved in different regions of the vast territory of the Khazar Khaganate. The Khazars themselves,

19 Pletneva 1981b, 64.

20 Pletneva 1981b, 65.

21 Pletneva 1989, 172.

22 Vinnikov and Pletneva 1998, 201.

23 Vinnikov and Pletneva 1998, 212.

leading a nomadic way of life in the Kalmyk steppes, were not affected by the invasion at all, similarly to many port towns along the Black Sea region and the Crimea. The Bulgars also remained there, including the "Black" ones [...] The steppe cities of the khaganate appeared to have remained virtually untouched as well: the capital Itil and Sarkel".[24] In 2000 S. Pletneva reaches the conclusion that during the last years of the ninth century the Pechenegs "simply passed through" the Don domains of Khazaria and settled far away in the west, in the steppes around the Dnieper, Dniester and the Prut (only one horde remained in the Khazar steppes—the so-called Khazar Pechenegs).[25]

The Pecheneg invasion corresponds to the first phase of nomadism according to S. Pletneva's classification, in which the population has no established permanent settlements and wanders around in search of suitable pastures all year round. The invasions that it commits are especially devastating because the whole population takes part in them.[26] According to P. Golden, the Pecheneg invasion was a migration of broken-up nomads, rather than a war of conquest. During this migration the Pechenegs conquered a group of weaker nomads (the Magyars), while the sedentary societies remained unaffected.[27]

During the process of their establishment, the Pechenegs could have represented an obstacle for normal relations between the different regions of the Khazar Khaganate, as well as for the development of international commercial relations, but they did not cause the downfall of Khazaria. It is possible that during their incursions some Bulgar and Alanian settlements may have been

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24 Pletneva 1997, 52; in her last summarizing work, Pletneva 1999 names several settlements and areas where life went on until the mid-tenth century: Sarkel and Tankeevka, 45; Maiaki, 72; the population of the Taganrog Bay in ancient Russian times (the eleventh to thirteenth centuries) remained the same as during Khazar times; such processes can be traced in several areas along the Lower Don, 134–135; Tepsen in the Crimea, 164 and others.

25 Pletneva 2000a, 82–98.

26 Pletneva 1982, 13–14 and 33. Another question in this case is to what extent it is appropriate to talk about a phase of development in nomadism and not about a type or a version of it, caused by reasons that cannot be tied to a certain periodization of the social or economic development. There are different theoretical models of the development of the nomadic economy. Khazanov 1975, 10–11, for instance, considers the "camp" stockbreeding (the first phase according to S. Pletneva) to be a strictly specific type of nomadism which is manifested only during migrations, conquests and the acquisition of new territories. This type (version) is different from the year-round nomadism which occurs in the desert areas of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Mongolia.

27 Golden 2003, no. 7, 91. According to Pritsak 1981b, no. 10, 9–10, the Pechenegs turned to a nomadic economy after they were driven by the Oghuz to the steppes between the Volga and Ural during the first half of the ninth century.

destroyed, but it would not be justified to talk about the destruction of the whole settlement system of the Saltovo culture. The Pechenegs were largely dependent, due to the lack of an agricultural sector (their own or a subordinate one). This is why they entered into political coalitions, and only then did they become a threat to one of the neighboring countries.[28] "Despite the troubles and ruin that befell the state, which had become stronger by the ninth century, the economy of the khaganate could not have vanished all of a sudden. Many settlements, dated by material finds almost to the end of the tenth century, continued to exist, and in the large cities the most sophisticated products were preserved and developed",[29] S. Pletneva asserts in 2005.

In his dissertation from 1992 (which was published between 2000 and 2005), S. Romashov revives the old theory about the destructive consequences of the Pecheneg invasion for Khazaria. According to him, the Pechenegs not only ravaged the Bulgar and Alanian settlements in the Don region, but also those in the Crimea and on the Taman Peninsula. Their invasion brought about the disintegration of the Khazar Khaganate and the ultimate downfall of the Khazar world. Khazaria became a "second-class" state and lost its pacifying and unifying role. The historian justifies his views with S. Pletneva's studies, but the ones dating before 1986.[30]

A. Tortika's findings show that the causes for the downfall of the Saltovo culture and, in particular, for the demise of the settlements along the Severski Donets and the Don have not yet been clarified. The Bulgaro-Alanian settlements probably happened to be aside from the main Pecheneg attack (which

28 The final expulsion of the Magyars, for example, became possible because they were engaged in another conflict, and the Pechenegs acted in coordination with Danube Bulgaria (Constantine Porphyrogenitus. *De Administrando Imperio*, ch. 40, in Litavrin and Novosel'tsev 1989, 165). According to *Russian Primary Chronicle*, in 915 the Pechenegs reached the land of the Rus' for the first time, making peace with Prince Igor before continuing on towards the Danube River. Later on he fought them (in 920), and in 944 they constituted a part of his troops as allies (*Povest' Vremennykh Let*, in Adrianova-Peretts 1950, 31–33). The Pechenegs did not constitute a serious threat to Rus' trade, despite the difficulties which they caused (these are described by Constantine Porphyrogenitus. *De Administrando Imperio*, ch. 2, in Litavrin and Novosel'tsev 1989, 37–39) by obstructing free movement along the Dnieper River. See esp. Golden 2003, no. 7, 58–101.

29 Pletneva 2005, 24.

30 Romashov 2002–2003, 84 and 2004, 218–222. The theory about the total defeat of the Saltovo settlements in the Crimea, caused by the Pechenegs in the period between the ninth and the tenth centuries, is laid out in its fullest by A. Iakobson (Iakobson 1973, 56–57 and 76–77). It is now obsolete and not accepted (see for example Baranov 1990, 152–153, as well as the sections written by Aibabin 2003).

was directed against the Magyars) and they were "affected only very slightly by the Pecheneg attacks. The majority of the Saltovo monuments safely survived the arrival of the Pechenegs in Eastern Europe and there are no traces of attacks (fires or destructions)". According to this scholar, the high military potential of the Alano-Bulgar population, as well as the military support of the central Khazar government all contributed to this.[31]

Constantine Porphyrogenitus stresses that the Pechenegs were divided up into eight tribes.[32] They did not succeed in creating a unified, centralized state. The Pecheneg tribes were lead by separate rulers that were independent from one another and belonged to different families where power was hereditary.[33] Their actions did not always—in fact, not even often—have the same foreign policy biases. The Pechenegs themselves were a heterogeneous community, which most likely originated from the mixture of Eastern-Iranian and Turkic tribes in the Middle Asia area, before their migration towards Eastern Europe.[34]

Constantine Porphyrogenitus writes that during the tenth century the Pechenegs inhabited the steppes on both sides of the Dnieper River.[35] The anonymous Persian chronicle from the tenth century, *Hudud al-'Alam*, mentions Turkic and Khazar Pechenegs, whom M. Artamonov places to the west and east of the Dnieper, in accordance with the account of the Byzantine emperor.[36] Since the Eastern source specifies that in the south the Khazar Pechenegs bordered with the Alans, it is possible that they may have inhabited a part of the North Caucasus steppes.[37] In connection with this, S. Pletneva's point of view is interesting: she presumes, based on found traces of the (probably) Pecheneg population in Samkerts (Tmutarakan) and in Sarkel, that there

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31 Tortika 2006a, 145, 153–158, and 505.

32 Constantine Porphyrogenitus. *De Administrando Imperio*, ch. 37, in Litavrin and Novosel'tsev 1989, 155–157.

33 Khazanov 1994, 178–179; see also Pritsak 1981b, no. 10, 11–16; Golden 1982, 64–66.

34 Pletneva 1982, 24; Pritsak 1981b, no. 10, 6–8; Armarchuk 2000, 115). Constantine Porphyrogenitus especially notes three of the Pecheneg subdivisions (the most manly and noble ones), which bore the name Kangar (Constantine Porphyrogenitus. *De Administrando Imperio*, ch. 37, in Litavrin and Novosel'tsev 1989, 159). Namely, these Kangars are considered to be the successors not only of the population that left behind the Dzhetyasar culture on the lower reaches of the Syr Darya, but also of the ancient Kangju (see Vainberg 1990, 100–101 and 283–285).

35 Constantine Porphyrogenitus. *De Administrando Imperio*, ch. 37, in Litavrin and Novosel'tsev 1989, 157.

36 Artamonov 1962, 352.

37 Bubenok 1997, 84. Pritsak 1981b, no. 10, 11 places the "Turkic" Pechenegs upstream of the Severski Donets, and the "Khazar" ones—in the region of Kuban'.

existed certain "peaceful Pechenegs" who lived in the big multiethnic city (Samkerts) under the rule of the khagan. "It is possible that the author of the Persian geographical work *Hudud al-ʿAlam* called this particular group Khazar Pechenegs. Like any other tributary nomads, they often betrayed their suzerain and when the opportunity arose, looted his lands, but the leaders of their horde willingly made use of the benefits of urban civilization and participated in urban trade, bringing stock and slaves to the markets".[38] This conclusion is important because it shows the possibility that a part of the Pechenegs may have been dependant on the Khazar state.

The term *Khazar Pechenegs* appears only in *Hudud al-ʿAlam*. In it, this concept refers to the Pechenegs who had migrated to the Northern Black Sea region, while the Pechenegs who remained in their old areas are called *Turkic Pechenegs*.[39] This is why the above-cited opinion of M. Artamonov, who locates the Khazar and Turkic Pechenegs to the east and west of the Dnieper respectively, is not acceptable. *Hudud al-ʿAlam* also contains the account of the Pechenegs who moved from place to place, depending on the pastures in the Khazar Mountains.[40] It is not clear whether these mountains can be identified with the North Caucasus. The Eastern source reflects the notion of the existence of a mountain range that crossed the whole land. In fact, *Hudud al-ʿAlam* contains the sole description in Eastern Europe of this range; according to it, the range runs "between the Sarirs and the Khazars up to the beginning of the Alanian borders, it then goes straight north until the end (of the borders of) the Khazars, after which it crosses the region of the Khazar Pechenegs and separates the Inner Bulgars from the Rus'", before ending at the outskirts of the Slav territory.[41] The conclusion that can be made is that the Khazar Mountains, where the Khazar Pechenegs had their pastures, were situated west of the Don. In other words, they were located in the steppe zone of the Northern Black Sea region. This confirms the assertion of M. Artamonov that the territory of the Pechenegs did not stretch eastwards of the Don and the Severski Donets. On the other hand, archaeological evidence of Pechenegs living in some Khazar cities (if they were not Oghuz)[42] indicates their ethnic presence there, without this meaning that the lands of the Khazar Pechenegs were situated around them. As was pointed out earlier, the term *Khazar Pechenegs* does not divide

38 Pletneva, 2001, 106.

39 Zakhoder 1967, 76; Minorsky 1937; Novosel'tsev 1986, 97.

40 Zakhoder 1967, 72.

41 Zakhoder 1962, 97–98.

42 The remains of the material culture, by which the presence of Pechenegs or Oghuz in the Khazar lands is estimated, are identical (for more details, see chapter 5.2).

the Pechenegs that inhabited the European steppes into two communities, but refers to all of them, as opposed to the Turkic ones that remained in Asia.[43]

According to Al-Bakri and Gardizi, the Pechenegs shared borders with the Cumans to the east, with the Khazars to the southwest, with the Slavs to the west, and "all these peoples carry out invasions, attack the Pechenegs, take them prisoner and sell them (into slavery)".[44] B. Zakhoder believes that there appears to be a mixing of the accounts on the periods before and after the Pecheneg migration, but it is also possible that the European and the Asian Pechenegs are both being identified at the same time.[45] The important thing in this case is the information on the attacks on the Pechenegs and their subsequent sale into slavery by the Khazars. Again according to *Hudud al-ʿAlam*, the majority of the slaves that entered the Muslim countries from the direction of Khazaria were Khazar Pechenegs.[46] In this sense, the words of the Khazar ruler Joseph—that the Pechenegs were subject to his power and paid him tribute—seem completely plausible.[47] Of course, they should not be taken literally. It is possible that the Pecheneg tribes, whose pastures were located west of the Don, near the Khazar (Bulgar and Bulgaro-Alanian) lands, were subject to Khazar rule. Based on the information from Constantine Porphyrogenitus, J. Howard-Johnston believes that the Khazars maintained some kind of influence and control over the Pechenegs.[48]

In connection with this, the accounts about the Bulgars in the Northern Black Sea region are of special importance. In the treaty, signed by the Rus' Prince Igor and Byzantium in 944, Kievan Rus' undertook the obligation not to attack the Byzantine lands in the Crimea, as well as not to let the "Black Bulgars" enter them. This is the only mention of the Black Bulgars in *Povest' Vremennykh Let*.[49] In fact, the written sources about them date from the tenth century. They are also mentioned twice by Constantine Porphyrogenitus (who wrote *De Administrando Imperio*, On the Governance of the Empire, between 948 and 952), who describes Black Bulgaria as a country which can fight the Khazars.[50]

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43 See also Romashov 2002–2003, 169 and 2004, 239–241.

44 Zakhoder 1967, 73.

45 Zakhoder 1967, 73.

46 Zakhoder 1967, 73.

47 Kokovtsov 1932.

48 Howard-Johnston 2007, 188–190.

49 *Povest' Vremennykh Let* in Adrianova-Peretts 1950, 34.

50 Constantine Porphyrogenitus. *De Administrando Imperio*, chapter 12, in Litavrin and Novosel'tsev 1989, 53.

The Eastern accounts on the Inner Bulgars date from the same period. This concept appears for the first time in Al-Balkhi's work, *Figures of the Climates* (circa 920–921). Al-Istakhri also mentions it in his *Book of Roads and Kingdoms*, written sometime around 930–933 and later revised in 951, as a supplement to the work of Al-Balkhi.[51] In both books the information regarding the "Inner" Bulgars is identical. A significant and relevant piece of information was later added by Ibn Hawqal who, on request from Al-Istakhri, continued the *Book of Roads and Kingdoms*, the last revision of which dates from 977. In 969 Ibn Hawqal visited the southern coast of the Caspian Sea where he learned from Khazar refugees of the fall of the Khazar Khaganate, as well as of the Inner Bulgars.[52] These Bulgars are also mentioned in *Hudud al-'Alam* (982–983).[53]

Though not quite clear, it is highly probable that the "Inner" and "Black" Bulgars constituted the same community.[54] The works of Al-Balkhi and Al-Istakhri do not allow the conclusion to be made that the Inner Bulgars were part of the Khazar Khaganate. Ibn Hawqal, however, directly associates their defeat, caused by the Rus', with that of Khazaria. It is quite certain that they were part of the khaganate at least until the 960s. In this context, of significance is the view of S. Pletneva, who assumes that "the subjection to the khagan and the probable service in his army and in other "administrative institutions" of the Bulgars that inhabited the lands between Bosporus and Chersonesus allowed Constantine Porphyrogenitus to call them "Black Bulgars", thus distinguishing them from the free Bulgars from the Danube and Volga regions".[55]

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51 Novosel'tsev 1965, 408.

52 Novosel'tsev 1965, 409.

53 Minorsky 1937, 45. The work also interestingly states that the Inner Bulgars were at war with all the Rus'.

54 See Merpert 1957, 25–29; Bozhilov 1979, 163–167; Dimitrov 1989, 14–15; Bozhilov and Dimitrov 1995, 47–51; Gening and Khalikov 1964, 124–126. The issue of Black Bulgaria is examined in detail by Romashov 2004, 248–256, complete with different viewpoints and relevant literature.

55 Pletneva 1999, 169. The definition "Black" has different meanings in the steppe world. In Turkic tradition the term *kara-budun* (black people) refers to the main part of the population of the land, while "White" has the meaning of "free" and can be associated with the nobility. (Gumilev 2004a, 68; Golden 1980, 142). Of particular interest is the account of Al-Istakhri about the division of the Khazars into black and white. While the Eastern scholar believes this division to include separate racial groups, it is more likely that the definition "White Khazars" referred to the uppermost class in the khaganate (the nobility) and "Black Khazars"—to the population that was subordinate to it or ruled by it (Dunlop 1967, 96 and 224; Artamonov 1962, 400). It is also possible that "black" meant "northern". For the symbolism of white and black in the steppe world, see also Stepanov 2005a, 117–118; Golden 2003, no. 8, 105–107.

The Byzantine emperor would have hardly taken into consideration which Bulgars were free and which not, when calling them "black". This definition stems from the Byzantine tradition, from where it probably was transferred into the contractual relations between Byzantium and Kievan Rus'. It is quite possible it was adopted from Danube Bulgaria. There it would be most logical that "black" was used for Bulgars who remained subordinate to the Khazar khagan (assuming that the interpretation of S. Pletneva is correct). Far more complicated would be the assessment of the lands this Bulgar community inhabited.

According to V. Sedov, the origin of the name of the Slavic tribe Severians is Iranian and means "black".[56] It is worth wondering whether the name was also used for the compact Bulgar community that inhabited the Severski Donets area, in immediate vicinity to the Severians. Also of particular interest is the question whether the Sabirs who are mentioned between the fifth and the seventh centuries in Dagestan, along with the Khazars, Bulgars, Barsils and other related tribes, could have a connection to this Bulgar community.[57] In subsequent centuries, in almost every place that the Bulgars chose to settle, a tribe with an ethnonym similar to that of the Sabirs is mentioned. The second most important urban and commercial center of Volga Bulgaria was Suwar. And Severi is the name of one of the tribes of Danube Bulgaria. Accounts regarding the Bulgars in Asia Minor indicate that in that part of the continent during the twelfth century there were two adjacent areas, known as Bulgar and Suwar.[58] To equalize the meaning of these names would, of course, be only hypothetical. However, in the steppe world the division into "white" and "black" is traditional and combines different semantic features (both in terms of social status and in terms of direction: typically "black" means "north").[59] In this sense, only a part of the Bulgars in the Khazar Khaganate may have been "black", instead of all of the descendants of the tribes that remained under the rule of Batbayan. Of particular interest is also the semantic preservation of the name "black" as a reference to the communities around the Severski Donets. This was also

56 Sedov 1982, 137–138.

57 Artamonov 1962, 78, 83–84, 131; according to Mavrodin 1945, 186–189, there is a direct link between the Sabirs and the Black Bulgars and the creators of the Saltovo culture were Sabiro-Bulgars.

58 Tupkova-Zaimova 2003, 48. Unfortunately, the dissertation of M. Daskalov "*Plemeto severi v Severoiztochna Bulgariia i Ukraina*" (Sofia, 1995) remained unattainable for me.

59 According to Turkic notions, for example, "north" as a direction means left/female. It is in opposition to "south" as right/male (L'vova, Oktiabr'skaia, Sagalaev, and Usmanova 1988, 43–45).

the area where the lands of Black Cumania were situated.[60] It is possible to seek here a connection to the legacy of the Black Bulgars. At this stage of scientific development, however, the assumptions that lead in this direction are uncertain.

Several of the few examined Bulgar settlements from the Severski Donets region existed up till the Mongol invasion of the 1220s. They demonstrate the ethnic continuity between the Saltovo (Bulgar) population and the population from the subsequent period (the ninth to thirteenth centuries).[61] V. Stoianov cautiously mentions the possible link between the Cuman subdivision of Burchevichi (a part of Black Cumania) and the commonly used in Eastern literature name *Burjan* in reference to the Bulgars.[62] As will be shown further on, in some of these accounts *Burjan* refers to the Inner (Black) Bulgars. And finally, the Terteroba, with whom the subsequent Bulgarian royal dynasty of the Terterids is associated, were also part of Black Cumania.[63]

The Bulgar population of the Khazar lands was most dense in the Crimean and the Taman Peninsulas, along the northern coast of the Sea of Azov and the lower reaches of the Don River, as well as along the lower and middle reaches of the Severski Donets.[64] This is a vast territory which could hardly have been populated by one Bulgar tribe alone. For now, it can be stated with certainty that a Christian Bulgar community existed in the Crimea, and a pagan one inhabited the area along the Don and the Severski Donets. According to Al-Balkhi and Al-Istakhri, the Inner Bulgars were Christians. Only Ibn Hawqal describes the Inner Bulgars as both Christians and Muslims,[65] although he probably associated Islam with accounts of the Volga Bulgars. On the other hand, archaeological finds support the possibility that the Bulgar community that inhabited the area around the Severski Donets consisted of both Christians and Muslims.[66]

Constantine Porphyrogenitus does not comment on the religious affiliation of the Black Bulgars. Would he have done so, had they been Christians? If the Black Bulgars were mostly pagans, it is unlikely that they inhabited the

60 Golden 1982, 68 and 2003, no. 10, 297–298; Stoianov 2006a, 131 and 137–139.

61 For instance, the studies of Kravchenko 2004, 260 show that between the ninth and the thirteenth centuries, an unfortified settlement existed on the site of the Sidorovo complex; its population was ethnically the same as in the tenth century, i.e. Bulgar.

62 Stoianov 2006a, 15 and 145; see also Golden 2003, no. 10, 298.

63 Stoianov 2006a, 139–140.

64 The settlement of Bulgars in Khazaria is examined in more detail in chapter 5.3.

65 Garkavi 1870, 193, 218, and 277.

66 Aksenov 2004, 136–144; Krasil'nikov 2007, 87–88.

Crimea.[67] In addition, Kievan Rus' accepted the obligation not to let them into the Byzantine domains there.[68] It can be said with certainty that a large part of the Saltovo settlements in the Crimea were Bulgar until the mid-tenth century.[69] V. Maiko, however, convincingly demonstrates that the Bulgar population (Christian by belief) left the peninsula (or the territory controlled by the Khazars) in the early 940s, and not as a result of a Pecheneg attack, but due to the strained and complex political situation in the Crimea in light of the conflict between Byzantium and Khazaria. In place of the Bulgars came ethnic Khazars and Alans who had probably migrated from the area along the lower reaches of the Volga.[70] This clarification is important, because it helps define more accurately the lands of the Black Bulgars. They were most probably located along the Severski Donets and the Don and did not include the Bulgar community on the southern coast of the Crimea, most of which left the peninsula in the mid-tenth century. It could be presumed that the two Bulgar communities differed from each other not only in their religious affiliation, but also in their political beliefs.

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67 On the extensive Byzantine missionary work in the Crimea during the ninth century, see Ivanov 2001, 30. Unfortunately, Ivanov's book "*Vizantiiskoe missionerstvo. Mozhno li sdelat' iz "varvara" khristianina?*" (Moscow, 2003) remained unattainable for me. On archaeological monuments that support the spread of Christianity among the Bulgars in the Crimea and the Christian temples there, see Baranov 1990.

68 In this relation, until recently quite a few scholars regarded the treaty of 944 between Kievan Rus' and Byzantium as evidence for the existence of Crimean territories, subordinate to the Rus'. On the inconsistency of this statement, see Gadlo 1968.

69 Maiko 1997, 109; Gadlo 1968, 64; on the Bulgars in the Crimea, see also Baranov 1990; Aibabin 2003. Unfortunately, the work of A. Aibabin "*Etnicheskaia istoriia raneevizantiiskogo Kryma*" (Moscow, 1999) remained unattainable for me.

70 Maiko 1997, 109–112 and 2002, 41–47; Baranov and Maiko 2001, 109–110. Aibabin 2003, 77 is of a similar point of view. He also believes that the Bulgar settlements in the Crimea were destroyed in the middle of the tenth century as a result of the campaign of the Khazar commander Pesakh. Still, it cannot be stated with certainty that after the mid-tenth century no Christians (Bulgars) remained in the Khazar part of the Crimea. This is supported by accounts from the early eleventh century regarding Georgius Tzul. In the chronicle of John Skylitzes he is mentioned as the ruler of Khazaria. At the same time, seals found with his name on them connect him more to the Byzantine administration on the peninsula. The seals in question are two and contain the text: "Georgius Tzul, imperial protospatharius and strategus of Chersonesus" and "Georgius Tzul, protospatharius of Bosporus" (Sokolova 1971, 68–74). These records hardly demonstrate that the Christian community in the Crimea was preserved after the 940s under Khazar rule. Rather, the seals confirm the spread of the Byzantine influence in the Crimea after the 960s, which could also infer the return of a part of the Bulgar Christian population that had emigrated earlier.

According to A. Sakharov, "the treaty of 944 gave Rus' an opportunity for action against Khazaria with the support of the Byzantine army".[71] Military clauses, affecting the Northern Black Sea region, point to the establishment of "a military alliance between Rus' and Byzantium against the Khazar Khaganate and its allies".[72] The participation of Rus' forces in the Byzantine army after 944 is recorded for the first time in 949, when a military campaign was launched against Crete.[73] Of particular interest is the account of Al-Masudi regarding the allied actions of the two states against the Syrian ruler Sayf Al-Dawla during the 950s. In his last work, *The Book of Notification and Review*, written in the year of his death, 956, Al-Masudi states that many of the Rus' had "recently entered the community of Ar-Rum (the Byzantine community), as had the Al-Arman (the Armenians) and Al-Burgar (the Bulgarians) [...] and Al-Bajanak (the Pechenegs) [...] And they (the Byzantines) relocated them (the Rus', Armenians, Bulgarians and the Pechenegs) to garrisons in many of their fortresses near the border with Ash-Shamiyah (Syria) and directed them at Burjan and the other peoples that were hostile to them and surrounded their lands".[74]

Firstly, the account shows that the alliance between the Byzantines, Armenians, Bulgarians (the Danubian ones) and the Rus' (their good relations at that time are noted in other sources as well) also included the Pechenegs. Ibn Al-Asir (1160–1234) talks about the military operations that the Byzantines, Bulgarians, Rus' and Armenians conducted against Syria in 954 and 955, without including the Pechenegs in his account.[75] Of particular importance in this case is the addition, made by Al-Masudi: according to him, this military alliance was not only related to the campaign against Syria, but was also directed against the other enemies of the empire.

The only specific name, mentioned by Al-Masudi in this regard, is Burjan. In Eastern literature, this term is used for two nations—the Burgundians and the Bulgars. V. Beilis rejects the possibility that *Burjan* referred to the Burgundians (who are mentioned this way only once) and assumes that the word was "some generalized name for the European enemies of Byzantium, of whom our author had only a vague knowledge".[76] It is generally accepted that in Eastern literature Burjan referred to the Danubian Bulgarians, but in this

71 Sakharov 1984, 228.

72 Sakharov 1984, 227.

73 Levchenko 1956, 21.

74 Beilis 1961, 23.

75 Beilis 1961, 28; Levchenko 1956, 216–217. It is quite probable that this account refers to the Bulgars of Asia Minor, situated in today's East Turkey (see Venedikova 1998).

76 Beilis 1961, 30.

case it is obviously not so. In the above-cited account the Danubian Bulgarians (Al-Burgar) are distinguished from Burjan. V. Petrukhin presumes that the Bulgars in question are the Black ones.[77] Al-Masudi probably did not always associate Burjan with the Danubian Bulgarians. In his work *Tidings of Time* Al-Masudi describes in detail the Burjan people (this is the only description of them in Eastern literature):

> Burjan are the descendants of Yunan, son of Japheth. The kingdom is large and extensive. They make war on the Byzantines, the Slavs, Khazars and the Turks. The Byzantines are their worst enemies. Between Al-Qunstantiniyah (Constantinople) and the land of Burjan (the distance is) 15 days of travel [...] The Burjan worship fire. They do not have their own (sacred) book [...] The Burjan have neither dinars nor dirhams, they do commerce with cows and sheep. If a truce is reached between them and the Byzantines, the Burjan pay by bringing slaves from the Slavs and others like them.[78]

Most scholars believe that Al-Masudi is referring to the Danubian Bulgarians, but his account could, with equal certainty, be about the Black (and more specifically the Inner) Bulgars. Probably not all accounts of the Burjan people refer to the Danubian Bulgarians. For example, the excerpt about the Inner Bulgars, found in the work of Al-Balkhi, corresponds to an older tradition in Eastern literature, related to the description of peoples from the outskirts of inhabited lands or from one end of the world to the other, as well as to the description of peoples that inhabited the seventh climate. Al-Farghani (who died in 865) gives the following two descriptions: "the seventh climate begins to the east of the northern parts of the land of Yajuj, then passes through the land of the Turks, goes along the coast of the Sea of Jurjan, on its northern side, then crosses the Sea of Rum, passes the land of Burjan and Slavonia (As-Saqaliba) and reaches the Western Sea [...] the end of the inhabited areas [...] it begins to the east of the land of Yajuj, then passes through the Tagazgaz land of the Turks, then the land of the Alans [...] through Burjan and then—through Slavonia and reaches the Western Sea".[79] And Al-Balkhi's second depiction is as follows: after the land of Yajuj it continues "along the upper part of Slavonia, crosses the land of the Inner Bulgars and Slavonia and passes through the land

77 Petrukhin 2005, 83.

78 Zaimova 2000, 36.

79 Garkavi 1870, 25; Kalinina 1988, 130.

of Rum towards Syria".[80] It is clear that the Inner Bulgars have appeared in place of Burjan. It should also be borne in mind that the Eastern writer distinguishes the Danubian Bulgarians, called "great", from the Volga ones, who are called "outer".

Al-Istakhri's text is identical to that of Al-Balkhi. In the work of Ibn Hawqal the meaning changes, the accounts regarding the various Bulgar communities are largely intertwined and the main goal is to inform about the wreckage caused by the Rus'.[81] Another excerpt from Ibn Hawqal, cited from Dimashqi, also points to such a confusion: "from the Encircling Sea comes a third arm, situated north of Slavonia, that extends near the Muslim Bulgars and turns eastward".[82]

Around the end of the tenth century, the Arabic writer Abu Nasr Al-Qummi, who wrote between 984 and 997, adheres to the older tradition: "The seventh climate begins to the north of the lands of Yajuj and Majuj, traverses towards the Turks also from the north of the coast of the Sea of Jurjan, crosses the land of the Burjan and Slavonia and ends at the Western Sea".[83] In Al-Masudi's work this account is related in a different way: "The Ifranja, Slavs, Nuqabard, Ashban, Yajuj and Majuj, Turk, Khazar, Burjan, Alan, Jalaliqa and the others, who, as stated, live under the Capricorn constellation, i.e. in the north".[84] It is clear that in these accounts the Burjan and the Inner Bulgars are mutually interchangeable.[85]

Of particular interest, with regard to the Burjan's location, is an account by Al-Khwarizmi from the 830s. Using the terminology of Ptolemy regarding the territory of the East European Steppe (European and Asian Sarmatia), he "fills" it with a different ethnic content. Thus, according to Al-Khwarizmi, European

80 Garkavi 1870, 274.

81 Garkavi 1870, 218.

82 Garkavi 1870, 222.

83 Garkavi 1870, 247.

84 Garkavi 1870, 138; Kalinina 2005a, 103.

85 It is noteworthy that besides the Inner Bulgars, *Hudud al-ʿAlam* also mentions the v.n.nd.r. This is especially interesting, since they do not come up in other Eastern sources, with the exception of Gardizi, who talks about N.n.d.r. In *Hudud al-ʿAlam* v.n.nd.r. are described as being weak and poor (Minorsky 1937, 53; see also Bozhilov and Dimitrov 1995, 49–51). The Khazar ruler Joseph associated the creation of the Khazar Khaganate with the war against the v.n.nd.r., i.e. the Asparukh's Bulgars. Is it possible that the account in *Hudud al-ʿAlam* refers to the remains of precisely this population, which lived in poverty and isolation from the rest of the Bulgar communities in the khaganate? This would explain the existence of a separate episcopate for the Onogurs during the eighth and ninth centuries somewhere in the region north of the Caucasus (see Ivanov 2001, 30).

Sarmatia (west of the Don) was inhabited by the Burjan, while Asian Sarmatia (east of the Don) was home to the Alans.[86] If the accounts about the Burjan and the Inner Bulgars are referring to the same community, then records of this Bulgar group date as far back as the period between the late eighth and the early ninth century. They do not appear "suddenly" in sources from the tenth century. The monuments of the Saltovo culture from the area of the Don and the Severski Donets should most probably be linked to these Bulgars.[87]

Al-Masudi's account may be helpful in examining the political events in the Northern Black Sea region from the late 940s and early 950s, which remain almost totally unknown to this day. As already mentioned, his account dates from 956. It shows that at that time, the Rus', the Pechenegs and the Byzantines were all part of a coalition that existed in the Northern Black Sea region. It is then only natural to presume that its actions were directed against Khazaria and thus against the Black Bulgars. Even if the Black Bulgars were independent from the Khazars during this period—a possibility that M. Artamonov is willing to accept,[88] they became a natural ally of Khazaria when faced with the need to fight against the coalition. According to the scientist, "in their relations with Byzantium the Khazars could only act through the Black Bulgars and indeed even with their forces, since the Bulgars were immediate neighbors of the Crimean domains of the Empire. Therefore, the treaty between the Greeks and Igor mentions the Black Bulgars and not the Khazars, which however should not lead to the conclusion that the Bulgars had at that time severed all relations with the Khazars and constituted a completely independent political entity".[89]

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86 Kalinina 1988, 17 and 92–95.

87 Romashov 2004, 251–255 explicitly rejects the possibility that Black Bulgaria was situated in the Severski Donets area, but bases his opinion solely on the assumption that the Pechenegs ravaged the Bulgar monuments there at the end of the ninth century. According to him, Black Bulgaria was situated in the coastal area of the Sea of Azov (more precisely, between the Don and Manich Rivers), in the place where Onoguria was previously located. It obtained its independence from the Khazar Khaganate after the Pecheneg invasion and became known as Black Bulgaria.

88 Artamonov 1962, 381–382.

89 Artamonov 1962, 382. The opinion of Spinei 2003, 121 is also of interest. According to him, the fact that it was the Black Bulgars and not the Pechenegs who were mentioned as a threat to Chersonesus in the treaty between Kievan Rus' and Byzantium indicates the possibility that the activity of the Pechenegs in the area north of the Black Sea could have been limited by the Khazar Khaganate.

I. Baranov agrees with the information, given by the Khazar ruler Joseph regarding the Khazar influence in the Crimea. He believes that the beginning of the end of the Khazar domination in that region "was initiated by Sviatoslav's eastern campaign from 965, which resulted in the destruction of the main forces of the Khazar Khaganate and its allies in the Volga Region, Khazaria itself, along the Don River and in the Northern Caucasus".[90] He bases his assumption on the traces of widespread fires and destruction of the Saltovo settlements in the Crimea. Until then "the Bulgars were the mainstay of the Khazar Khaganate in Taurica and stood in the way of the interests of both the Rus' and the Byzantines".[91] V. Maiko believes that "the territory of Khazaria reached its maximum size precisely in the 940s and 950s".[92] Like I. Baranov, A. Tortika also assumes that the demise of the Saltovo monuments in the Don Region is a result of the Khazaro-Russian conflict and more specifically of the campaign of the Kievan prince Sviatoslav from 965.[93]

A. Novosel'tsev, however, is of a completely different point of view. Based on Constantine Porphyrogenitus' account regarding the peoples and nations that could have fought with Khazaria, including Black Bulgaria and Alania, he regards the Khazar Khaganate as a secondary force that was of interest to Byzantium only in connection with the safety of its Crimean domains.[94] Nonetheless, the account of the Byzantine emperor should not be interpreted in such a way. He is showing the political possibilities before Byzantium and not the political reality at the time of the creation of his work and even less thereafter. The emperor is simply indicating which peoples could be used

90 Baranov 1990, 153.

91 Baranov 1990, 153.

92 Maiko 1997, 114. The Khazar authority in the Crimea during the tenth and even the eleventh centuries is disputed by a number of scientists (see for instance Aibabin 2003; Naumenko 2004b; Novosel'tsev 1990, 109–110, 133; Romashov 2002–2003, 143 and 2004, 256; Gertsen 2002; Makarova 2003). Still, I. Baranov and V. Maiko are the main researchers of the Saltovo monuments in the Crimea (see additionally Baranov and Maiko 2001, 98–110; Maiko 2000, 87–93).

93 These events led to a significant displacement of Alano-Bulgar population from the Don Region, since excavations have shown that most of the settlements inhabited by these peoples were deserted voluntarily (there are no signs of destruction). The scholar presumes that later some Bulgar "families" were "integrated" in the unions of the Pechenegs or the Oghuz (Tortika 2006a, 110, 182, 229, 505, and 510).

94 Novosel'tsev 1990, 219. Constantine Porphyrogenitus writes that those who could fight the Khazars included the Uz (ch. 9 and 10), Alania (ch. 10 and 11) and Black Bulgaria (ch. 12), in Litavrin and Novosel'tsev 1989, 51 and 53.

against which in principle (and not only against Khazaria). This notion is based on past events, as well as on possible options for the future. The great attention he pays to Khazaria is an indication not of the weakness of the khaganate in the mid-tenth century, but of its power.

Based on the same account, as well as on the information available on Byzantine court ceremonies, J. Howard-Johnston opposes the view of A. Novosel'tsev. In J. Howard-Johnston's opinion, the account of Constantine Porphyrogenitus shows that Byzantium regarded the Khazar Khaganate as a leading force in the north even in the middle of the tenth century.[95] Ultimately, at the time of Sviatoslav's campaign the only allies the Rus' had in the Northern Black Sea region were the Pechenegs, who Ibn Hawqal called "the blade, spike of the Rus' ".[96] This is the time when the Pechenegs, along with the Rus', can be "blamed" for being among the main causes for the devastation of the Saltovo culture that led to its demise. According to J. Howard-Johnston, this "fatal" blow to the Khazar Khaganate was successful not because Khazaria was weak, but because it was completely unexpected.[97]

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95 Howard-Johnston 2007, 172 and 181–183.

96 Kalinina 1976, 100.

97 Howard-Johnston 2007, 183.

CHAPTER 3

Khazaria and International Trade in Eastern Europe in the Late Ninth and Tenth Centuries

The main routes that connected the Arabian and Persian South with the Scandinavian North passed through the Khazar Khaganate. The custom duties the Khazar rulers received at trade spots are regarded as one of the main sources of income for the Khazar treasury. Many scholars therefore believe that the development of Khazaria depended mostly on its geographical position.[1]

Commercial activity during this period was mutually beneficial not only for countries that contained the main trade centers, but also for remotely located tribes. The depths of the large and sparsely populated forests, as well as the remote northern regions were the habitats of animals with precious fur—one of the most sought-after commodities in the Muslim South. In return, huge amounts of silver dirhams travelled northwards and especially towards Scandinavia, inciting the interest of more and more Scandinavians towards Eastern Europe. The growth of this trade became possible after the fall of the Umayyads and the rise of the Abbasids in the Arab Caliphate (in 749). The new dynasty stopped the aggressive expansionist policy of their predecessors and established peaceful relations with Khazaria, the trade roads became safer and as a result the silver Arab dirhams reached the Scandinavian Peninsula circa 800.[2]

The second half of the eighth century saw the beginning of the Rus' (Nordic) penetration of Eastern Europe, which occurred along the main trade routes: the basins of the Volga, Oka, Don and the Dnieper Rivers. During the eighth century, the Khazar state dominated the middle reaches of the Dnieper and the Volga and probably the whole basin of the Don, with its influence extending to the whole right bank of the Oka. A rivalry arose between the Rus' and the Khazars regarding the routes and the peoples that lived in their vicinity and provided the goods needed for trade. The conflicts, as well as the allied relations between the tribal formations and states in Eastern Europe all depended on the growth of international trade and the influx of silver coins from the East towards Western Europe.

1 Dunlop 1967, 232; Golden 1980, 106; Novosel'tsev 1990, 114; Pletneva 1976, 68; Gumilev 1997, 170. See also Pritsak 1981a, 15–27; Noonan 2007.

2 Shepard and Franklin 2000, 25–27; Noonan 1987–1991, 1990 and 2000b.

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The initial period of the Nordic ethnic and commercial penetration of Eastern Europe remains somewhat unclear. The earlier trade ties between the peoples along the Baltic Sea coast and the peoples of the south lands can be assessed from the remains of Scandinavian (Swedish) settlements from the sixth and seventh centuries, found in the Baltic region of the East European Plain. The first traces of Eastern coins on the island of Gotland and in Sweden appear around that time. The Swedish settlements, however, appear to have existed for a short while and the trade probably ceased.[3] It is not clear why their end date—the end of the eighth century—coincides with the initial period of the Rus' penetration of Eastern Europe, when the ties between the Scandinavian peoples and the Arab Caliphate became progressively stronger. The settlements in question are located in today's Latvia, like Grobin, situated in the lands of the Baltic tribe Kurs in the vicinity of today's Liepaja, and a group of settlements around the mouth of the Western Dvina (Daugava River). The Scandinavian presence in these places dates between the second half of the seventh century and the early ninth century. During the ninth and tenth centuries, trade between the Swedish Vikings and the local population was slow. It was revived in the early eleventh century, after the influx of silver from the East ceased. A certain exception can be seen on the territory of Prussia, on the Sambia Peninsula, where Scandinavian settlements existed between the ninth and the eleventh centuries.[4] They are most likely not directly related to the growth of trade with the East.

During the eighth century, a new type of settlements emerged in the Scandinavian countries. Gradually, they gained importance for international trade, connecting the Arab East with Western Europe. In Denmark for example, such a settlement was Hedeby and in Sweden it was Birka. Hedeby is situated in the southeastern part of the Jutland Peninsula. It was one of the large Scandinavian trade centers that grew along with the influx of Eastern silver coins. The heyday of Hedeby was during the tenth century. Its significance waned after the influx of dirhams from the Muslim world towards the West stopped. The connection between Hedeby and the Eastern peoples was made through Birka. Birka was situated on the Swedish island of Björkö in Lake Mälaren. The settlement began to loose its importance after the 960s (the latest Eastern coins, found there, are dated from that time). It is accepted that this was a consequence of the defeat of the main Khazar trade centers by the Rus' Prince Sviatoslav. Another trade center in Scandinavia was the island of Gotland, where huge amounts of Eastern and Western silver coins have been

3 Mavrodin 1945, 141.

4 Lovmianskii 1985, 114–116; Gurevich 1966, 84.

found. Unlike Birka and Hedeby, the commercial significance of the island was preserved even after trade with the East ceased. Its heyday actually came in the following years. Around the time when Birka and Hedeby were established in Scandinavia, during the second half of the eighth century, similar settlements emerged also in Eastern Europe, on the territory of today's North Russia. The earliest of them was Ladoga.[5] The first accounts regarding the Rus' date from that time. Attracted by the influx of silver Arab dirhams, they quickly joined not only in the trade activities, but also the struggle to take hold of the major trade routes in Eastern Europe.

Trade growth is assessed today mainly through silver coin finds. Two periods of infiltration of these coins in Eastern Europe can be distinguished. One is from the late eighth century to the end of the ninth century, with the prevailing coins being Abbasid dirhams, and the other is the tenth century when the prevailing coins were Samanid ones. From the second half of the eighth century onwards the markets of the Arab Caliphate had a lot of dirhams, as a result of economic prosperity at the beginning of the Abbasid rule. At that time Arabic culture became infused with a Sassanid (Persian) and Hellenistic heritage. The Abbasids expanded the horizons of the Arab world. Commercial and cultural ties were established with China, India, Europe and Africa.[6] Eastern traders (of Arabic and Jewish—the so-called Radhanites—descent) appeared at marketplaces in Eastern Europe. Silver mining was enabled by large reserves in Iran and Hindu Kush. In return, the Arab and Persian traders obtained from the forest regions of Eastern Europe furs, honey, wax, linen, amber, swords and last but not least—slaves.[7]

Until the first third of the ninth century, the main coins, found in Eastern Europe, came from Africa (and are probably related to the Radhanites). The largest amount is found in the basin of the Don and the Severski Donets. Significantly smaller amounts have been found in Transcaucasia and the Baltics. The trade route, through which these coins reached Eastern Europe, began at the North African coast, passed through Syria and Transcaucasia and reached the Don and the Severski Donets (along the lower reaches of which the Bulgaro-Alanian settlements and fortresses were situated), before continuing north towards the upper reaches of the Volga.[8]

5 Mel'nikova and Petrukhin 1986, 70–71; Gurevich 1966, 48–58; Shepard and Franklin 2000, 28–41.

6 Darkevich 1976, 77.

7 Darkevich 1976, 148.

8 Kalinina 1986, 78–80; Shepard and Franklin 2000, 46–48.

The trade route that ran from Iran towards Khazaria, passing through the Caucasus, emerged around the middle of the ninth century. The coins that prevailed along this route were struck in Rey (today's Tehran). The most comfortable road from Baghdad (hoards with Baghdad coins date mainly from the ninth century; during the tenth century the dirhams that were struck in Iraq came mostly from Mosul) to Khazaria passed through the Caucasian passages on the western coast of the Caspian Sea, near Derbent. There was also a second route that passed through Merv, Bukhara and the two chief centers of Khwarezm along the lower reaches of the Amu Darya, Urgench (Gorganch) and Kiat, before continuing on along the Ustyurt Plateau (on the eastern Caspian coast) towards the Ural and Volga Rivers.[9]

From the late ninth century, but mostly from the early tenth, dirhams (Samanid ones) can also be found along the middle reaches of the Dnieper. At the time, the Rus' settled in Kiev and Ismail Samani (892–907) established the Samanid state, the center of which became Bukhara. The new state began to mint large amounts of coins. The Samanids were regarded as descendants of the Sassanids and they revived the Persian language and literature in Middle Asia. They secured the trade routes, which stimulated the growth of cities and trade. The Samanid coins were struck mostly in Bukhara, Nishapur, Samarkand and Merv. The road from Middle Asia to Khazaria gained significance, as well as the Khazar capital Itil, where the roads from Khwarezm to the lower reaches of the Volga and from Transcaucasia to the north Caspian coast met. The growth of Bolgar is also related to the Samanid coin minting.

During the first half of the tenth century, the Volga Bulgars began to mint coins that were copies of the Samanid ones. The early coins of the Volga Bulgars contained an inscription of the Samanid ruler's name, along with the location of the coin minting—Bolgar or Suwar. Subsequently, the coins retained their Samanid look, but the inscribed name became that of the Volga Bulgars ruler. The influence of the Samanids is of essential importance in view of the rise of Volga Bulgaria as a major economic and political center. They are associated with the spread of Islam in the steppes, adopted en masse by the Volga Bulgars in the early tenth century. The earliest found coin of the Volga Bulgars dates from 918/919, while the latest (of the Samanid type) is from 986/987. Hoards with such coins are found mostly along the Oka and Volga Rivers, reaching as far as the Scandinavian trade centers.[10]

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9 Kalinina 1986, 81–82; Gumilev 1997, 214, Darkevich 1976, 150.

10 Shepard and Franklin 2000, 100–101; Kropotkin 1986, 38–40; Darkevich 1976 114; Noonan 1980, 297–306.

Between the eighth and the tenth centuries, silver coins were a truly important commodity for the Scandinavians. Until the middle of the tenth century, neither Eastern Europe nor Scandinavia had any other sources of silver or an alternative import to the dirhams. Silver coins were easy to carry and were used both as a means for commerce, a sign of prestige and for the production of various silver ornaments. During this period, gold rarely appeared in international trade, probably because it was much rarer—and much more expensive.[11] Byzantium is, of course, an exception here, since it never ceased to mint gold coins and, like Danube Bulgaria, did not partake in the trade with silver coins.

The flow of dirhams towards Eastern Europe was not constant. During different periods, the fluctuations in their amounts reflect the changes and problems that occurred in the Eastern trade. Two major crises in the influx of dirhams are known—from the last quarter of the ninth century and from the second half of the tenth century. It is important to understand not only what caused them, but also how they influenced the development of the Khazar state.

Noting the paucity of hoards, containing dirhams, between 870 and 900, T. Noonan seeks the cause in the Eastern European trade, since coin minting in the Arab Caliphate did not appear to have stopped at that time. During the second half of the ninth century, several Christian and Muslim states south of the Caucasus broke away from the direct authority of the Abbasids. At the same time, the Alid movement in Tabaristan hindered trade relations in the Caspian Sea. Overall, this period was rather unstable for the Caliphate, including a large-scale fragmentation of its subordinate territories. A further obstacle may have been the transition of the control over the Northern Black Sea steppe to the Pechenegs. The roads across the steppe up to the Crimea and the connection between the Don and the Volga were of significant importance for the Rus'-Khazar-Islamic trade. Thus, as a result of the Pecheneg invasion, the Rus' merchants' access to the lower reaches of the Volga was limited and perhaps even cut off. The emergence of Samanid dirhams in the early tenth century indicates the use of a new road that connected Middle Asia with Itil and Volga Bulgaria and went around the already dangerous region of the Sea of Azov.[12]

V. Petrukhin's interpretation of T. Noonan's insights leads him to a different conclusion. In his view, the trade crisis was caused by the settlement of Prince Oleg in Kiev (882), who released the Slavic tribes Radimichi and Severians from

11 Noonan 1994, 216. During the eighth century, the minting of gold coins in Western Europe ceased completely. The coin hoards dated after 710 contain only silver denarii. The minting of gold coins was revived only in the thirteenth century (Favier 2002, 100–102).

12 Noonan 1985, 198–202.

Khazar rule. The Khazar Khaganate blocked the Rus' access to the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus, forcing them to seek an alternative route. The influx of dirhams (which by then were Samanid ones) was revived in the early tenth century and passed through Volga Bulgaria, thus evading Khazaria.[13]

J. Shepard offers a different view on the causes of the late ninth century crisis. According to him, the commercial activity of settlements such as Ladoga, the Riurikovo hillfort (near the site where Novgorod was later erected) or the settlements along the Upper Volga contradicts the idea of a decline in the dirham influx. The significant increase in the number of Rus' engaged in trade may have led to the spread of the same amount of coins on a larger territory.[14] Without denying the importance of the problems in the Abbasid Caliphate and of the Pecheneg invasion, J. Shepard believes that there was a greater demand for silver coins. Most of them were used as raw material for ornaments, "or they may have been repeatedly changing hands—circulating—among the Rus' in a way which had not happened earlier. This might have left fewer reasons for depositing the dirhams in the ground".[15]

Clarifying the causes of the trade crisis from the late ninth century is important as it helps to understand whether the shift in the main trade routes resulted in the isolation of the Khazar Khaganate. The evidence, provided by Ibn Khordadbeh (who wrote the *Book of Roads and Kingdoms* ca. 885–886) and by Ibn al-Faqih (who wrote the *Concise Book of Lands* ca. 903) indicates that in order to reach the Caspian Sea, Rus' merchants had to cross the Black Sea, before entering Khazaria and continuing on towards the lower reaches of the Volga.[16] This information shows that during the ninth century the Rus' did not use the whole length of the Volga River, as might be expected, but headed first towards the steppes of the Northern Black Sea region. The coin hoards help in tracing the paths of the Rus'.

The passage along the river routes in the forest zone of Eastern Europe was not easy and the Rus' merchants were dependant on the local population. Eastwards from Ladoga (where the earliest hoard with dirhams in Eastern Europe was found, dating ca. 786–787) they either travelled straight towards the Volga along the Mologa River, or towards Beloozero, from where they

13 Petrukhin 1995a, 92–93 and 132; Petrukhin 2005, 76–78. See also the opinion of Zuckerman 1995, 259–270, according to whom the time of submission of Kiev and the surrounding lands by Oleg can be shifted from the 880s and 890s to the 920s and 930s. See also the view of Petrukhin 2000a.

14 Shepard and Franklin 2000, 97.

15 Shepard and Franklin 2000, 96.

16 Novosel'tsev 1965, 384–385.

could also reach the Volga by continuing southwards along the Sheksna River. Downstream along the river they could continue towards the mouth of the Kotorosl River, where the road deviated from the Volga. This is evidenced by a lack of hoards with dirhams along the Volga basin up till the mouth of the Oka, as well as by the lack of settlements there. Southwards along the Kotorosl the road led to Rostov Lake, south of which was the Sarski hillfort—a trade settlement that emerged at the same time as Ladoga. It is presumed that it was established during the eighth century by the Finnish tribe Merya. By the end of the eighth century and especially during the ninth century, a Scandinavian population also gradually began to settle there. It is important to note that the Sarski hillfort was not located on either of the main rivers.[17]

The detour along the Kotorosl laid the main trade route through the Zalesie region. The area was fertile and relatively densely populated, compared to the large uninhabited forest areas of the plain. Along the water link between the Kotorosl, Kliazma and the Oka were vast fields with rich semi-chernozemic soil, where the settlements were concentrated. According to J. Shepard, "if Scandinavians frequented the Sarskii fort and other settlements of the district, it was not because they were obvious stopping-places for voyages down or along the Volga. They probably diverted there because the Sarskii fort was already a local centre of exchanges".[18]

There is no specific reason to argue that during the ninth century, after reaching the Oka, the Rus' traders continued on towards the lands of the Volga Bulgars. Even if they did, they would hardly have done this often. Up along the middle and upper reaches of the Oka, where hoards with dirhams dating from the ninth century have been found, two more settlements were located: one of them was Murom, and the other one was located in the place where the city Riazan would later be built. The territory south of the Oka was subjugated to the Khazar Khaganate. Here, the hoards with dirhams link the Oka to the Don basin, along which hoards from the ninth century have been found. It can be thus assumed that during the ninth century the route, used by the Rus' to get to the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus, went south from the Oka along the Don basin, or from the Upper Dnieper towards the Severski Donets and the Don.[19] Especially this part of the route (south of the Oka, along the Don towards the Caucasus) that traversed the lands of the Viatichi and the Bulgaro-Alanian

17 Shepard and Franklin 2000, 42–43 and 48; Nasonov 1951, 173–175.

18 Shepard and Franklin 2000, 43.

19 Shepard and Franklin 2000, 46–49 and 103; Noonan 2000a, 384; and 2000b, 936–937. According to Tortika 2006a, 449–452, the Oka connected the Volga with the Don.

fortresses and settlements, most probably was not used in the tenth century or at least not as much as during the ninth century.

The alternative route was developed in the early tenth century, passing through Volga Bulgaria, where at that time Bolgar rose as a significant trade center. The Pechenegs, no matter how damaging to trade ties, could not have caused such a significant change. It is indicative that the road along the Dnieper River towards the Black Sea, situated in the middle of Pecheneg lands, gained significant importance for the Rus' during the tenth century.[20] The reason for the northward shift of the route lies rather in the change of the initial points from which the dirhams were imported to Eastern Europe. The disappearance of Abbasid dirhams and their replacement with Samanid ones from Middle Asia indicates the development of roads to the east of the Don and the Caucasus.

V. Petrukhin believes that Khazaria blocked the access of the Rus' to the Abbasid markets and interrupted the import of dirhams, thus forcing them to create the alternative route through Volga Bulgaria that connected them to the Samanid lands, while avoiding the Khazar Khaganate. Bolgar became the main market for international trade with the Rus'. The fact that the rulers of the Volga Bulgars began to mint their own coins was an act of independence, although Ibn Fadlan notes that they paid tribute to the Khazar khagan.[21] Leaving aside the question of whether Volga Bulgaria was part of Khazaria at that time or not, there could hardly have been a Khazar trade blockade in the late ninth century. Following the reasoning of V. Petrukhin, the ones blocked would not be the Rus', but the Khazars themselves who were evaded by the main trade routes. In addition, the first half of the tenth century is a period during which the import of dirhams increased incredibly (and thus constituted almost a third of all dirhams, imported during the 940s and 950s).[22] It seems to me that during this period neither the Rus' nor the Khazars had any interest or the ability to mutually block each other. It is much more probable that the cease in the influx of Abbasid dirhams was caused by the Abbasid Caliphate itself.

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20 According to Romashov 2004, 223, the Don region lost its economic importance as a result of the Pecheneg invasion. The analysis of Golden 2003, no. 7, 95 however proves that during this period trade with the neighboring sedentary communities was essential for the Pechenegs. Therefore, even if they did have the opportunity, the Pechenegs had no interest in seriously hindering the passage of the international trade caravans.

21 Petrukhin 1995a, 93 and 2005, 77–78. Volga Bulgaria was not isolated from the international trade routes either during the examined period or during previous centuries (see Kovalev 2005b, 55–76). In this case, it is the main roads along which the silver coins were distributed.

22 Noonan 1992, 248.

The Southern Caspian coast is a narrow strip of land, above which towers the rugged Elburz Ridge (the highest point of which is 5610 m). It is comprised of three regions: Deilem to the southwest, Tabaristan to the south and Gorgan (or Jurjan—the farthest point, reached by Rus' merchants in the ninth century, according to Eastern sources) to the southeast. For a long time the local population lived in isolation. In the 840s, the Abbasids succeeded in completely conquering Tabaristan, whose population widely accepted Islam, but in its Shiite form. This was probably in part due to the influence of the neighboring Deilemites (from the Deilem region), who had earlier given shelter to the followers of the Alids. The Deilemite rulers were regarded as descendants of the Persian kings and even took their title, Shahenshah (King of Kings). In 864, the Tabaristanis raised a rebellion and urged the Alid Hasan ibn Zayd, who until then had lived in Rey, to lead it. In 872, he invaded Jurjan, where military conflicts continued until the very end of the ninth century.[23] In 900, the Samanid ruler Ismail Samani seized Jurjan and Tabaristan (without Deilem), but these regions continued to suffer attacks throughout the tenth century.[24]

At the same time, in 869 Derbent became an independent emirate. Southeast of Derbent was Shirvan, independent since 861. The two states often organized campaigns against the neighboring "infidel" tribes in Shandan and also against the Sarirs (peoples that belonged to the Khazar sphere of influence according to the letter of Joseph).[25]

The Khazars could fight against Derbent due to their common land border. Since they did not have a fleet, they could not reach the Southern Caspian coast. Examining the information on the Rus' campaigns in the Caspian Sea, L. Gumilev concludes that the Rus' were summoned or hired by the Khazar ruler.[26] The campaigns most probably reflect the common commercial interests of the Khazars and the Rus' who tried to eliminate the barriers to trade along the traditional route. It is hardly a coincidence that Ibn Isfandiyar's *History of Tabaristan* (written in the first half of the thirteenth century) refers to a Rus' military campaign in the Caspian Sea during the time of Hasan ibn Zayd.[27] Especially in view of the fact that the subsequent Rus' campaigns in that region (regardless whether it was one or more, dated from 909, 910

23 Müller 2004a, 763 and 2004b, 42–46; Gumilev 2004b, 44.

24 Müller 2004b, 48–52; Gumilev 1997, 216–218.

25 See Novosel'tsev 1990, 192–193 and 214; Ashurbeili 1983, 75–79; Minorskii 1963, 64–65.

26 Gumilev 1997, 218–219.

27 Novosel'tsev 1968, 99.

and 913)[28] that are known from Eastern sources, coincide with the Khazars' military actions against Derbent (in 901, 909 or 912, in alliance with the Sarirs and the Shandans).[29]

It can be concluded that despite the joint efforts of the Rus', Khazars and the Samanids, the Caspian-Caucasian trade connection with the Muslim East remained closed during the tenth century. The only alternative was the road that led east of the Volga towards the Samanid state. Even if the Khazars would have wanted to cut off the access of the Rus' to the Caspian Sea, they would have had no incentive to do so, since they were isolated from the new Muslim states, located south of the Caucasus and along the Southern Caspian coast. The Rus' campaigns in the Caspian Sea indeed indicate the existence of common interests despite the accession of the Severians and the Radimichi by Oleg. L. Gumilev could therefore be quite right in assuming that Oleg and Khazaria may have had an agreement that divided their spheres of influence in Eastern Europe.[30]

According to T. Noonan, the new route did not isolate Khazaria from international trade. It led both to Itil and to Bolgar. The Middle Asian trade with Khazaria and Eastern Europe was "a response to the disturbances in the Azov steppe which resulted from the Pecheneg migration".[31] The transformation of Volga Bulgaria into a large trade center was of significant importance. Rus' merchants began to travel more often to Bolgar than to Itil. T. Noonan also accepts the possibility that Khazaria may have been avoided by land caravans travelling between the Samanid state and Volga Bulgaria, and intentionally so, since it was more convenient for them to reach Itil. In his opinion, the adoption of Islam indicates a disrespect to Khazar authority, while the Bulgar state

28 According to Novosel'tsev 1990, 212–213, there was only one campaign. His opinion is shared by Romashov 2005, 107–110. Artamonov 1962, 370 and Pletneva 1976, 66 believe that the campaigns were three.

29 The last campaign of the Rus' in the Caspian Sea, prior to their victory over Khazaria, was in 943, before the Deilemites captured Baghdad (in 945). Perhaps the author of the *Cambridge Document* was referring to this campaign in particular; after which the Rus' were subjected to Khazar authority (lastly, see Romashov 2005, 110–119). Dunlop 1967, 241 accepts the possibility that in 943 the Khazars blocked the road along the Volga for the Rus' military (hence, not commercial) fleet.

30 Gumilev 1997, 215. V. Petrukhin accepts the possibility of a thaw in the Rus'-Khazar relations in the early tenth century, reflected in the Rus' campaigns in the Caspian Sea. Ultimately, the flow of silver coins through the Caucasus and Khazaria was not reinstated. Khazaria's blockade of Kievan Rus' coincides with the entry of the latter in the Khazar sphere of influence—i.e. in the 940s. (Petrukhin 1995a, 93–94 and 1993, 72–77).

31 Noonan 1985, 202.

along the Volga became independent in 950 at the latest, when its rulers began to mint their own dirhams.[32] Thus, "the decline in Khazaria was accompanied by the emergence of the Volga Bulgar markets as the chief port of entry for dirham imports into Eastern and Northern Europe".[33]

J. Shepard interprets the appearance of silver coins in Volga Bulgaria as a sign of the increased economic capabilities of its ruler.[34] He does not believe that the Khazars remained isolated from the Eastern trade. The road along the Volga from Bolgar to Itil continued to be in use, and the Bulgars "had a choice of routes to the Moslem countries".[35]

A. Novosel'tsev doubts that Volga Bulgaria liberated itself from the Khazar influence after Ibn Fadlan's visit. Commercial interests required unity among the peoples along the Volga with priority going to the ones that controlled the mouth of the river. According to him, Volga Bulgaria became independent after Prince Sviatoslav's campaigns from the mid-960s.[36]

The fact that the Bulgars along the Volga began to issue their own coins in the early tenth century is quite unusual, given that no other Bulgar community minted its own coins in the Early Middle Ages (including Danube Bulgaria in its legitimate kingly period after 927). Neither did the Bulgars from the Don region or the area around the Severski Donets, whose lands were part of the dirham trade routes. However, does coin minting really indicate the independence of the Volga Bulgaria rulers from the Khazars? In the Samanid state, the various centers minted coins, but this did not make them independent from Samanid rule. When the Volga Bulgars inscribed the name of the Samanid ruler on their coins during the first half of the tenth century, were they recognizing his authority?

The adoption of Islam was among the reasons for the Volga Bulgars to start minting coins. In the Islamic world, coin minting was not so much a manifestation of independence (at least in theory, everyone was a subject of the Caliph, just as the population of the Khazar Khaganate was subject to the khagan), as a sign of economic prosperity and a form of prestige. Given that

32 Noonan 1999, 504–505; Noonan 1992, 250; Noonan 1994, 219–220.

33 Noonan 1994, 220; see also Noonan 2007, 207–244. According to Noonan 2007,234–237, the road through Khazaria was second in importance for the transport of dirhams, following the road that connected Khwarezm with Volga Bulgaria. The role of the Khazars in the trade during the tenth century was rather insignificant, since 90% of it passed through Volga Bulgaria.

34 Shepard and Franklin 2000, 100.

35 Shepard and Franklin 2000, 102.

36 Novosel'tsev 1990, 199; Davletshin 1990, 83 is of a similar opinion.

Ibn Rustah and Ibn Fadlan explicitly state that the Rus' merchants accepted only silver coins for their wares,[37] the appearance of dirhams with the names of the Bulgar trade centers (Bolgar and Suwar) on them indicates the places where those exchanges might have taken place. Volga Bulgaria had a lot of silver concentrated in its territory that was mostly intended for export. This was a necessary condition for the emergence and subsequent existence of an international trade center.[38] The coins are a sign of the increased self-confidence of the rulers of Volga Bulgaria. If they wanted to emphasize their prestige, coin minting would have had a bigger impact in the Islamic world and among the Rus' than among the Khazars. Insofar as copies of Abbasid coins were minted in Khazaria during the ninth century to be used in the international commercial exchange,[39] the practice of the Volga Bulgars is nothing new, only the amounts were much larger. However, the scope of Eastern trade during the first half of the tenth century was much bigger, compared to the ninth century.

Usually, the strained relations between the Volga Bulgars and the Khazars are viewed on the basis of Ibn Fadlan's work, in which the Bulgar ruler Almish asked the Caliph for money to build a fortress to protect him from Khazaria.[40] But Almish himself pointed out that he was capable of building the fortress with his own funds. By asking for money he was actually seeking the approval of the Caliph in Baghdad.[41] In any case, the mission of Ibn Fadlan did not bring him such an approval.

What relation could the Khazar khagan have had to the coins of the Volga Bulgars, and to their adoption of Islam, since the Samanids were probably the main partner of Khazaria in the tenth-century Eastern trade? Moreover, the problems, created by the Deilemites, for example, were equally frustrating for Khazaria, the Samanids and the Caliph in Baghdad. Al-Masudi explicitly states that many Muslim traders and tradesmen settled in Khazaria because of its safety and order. He thus complements the account of Al-Istakhri who

37 Quoted from Shepard and Franklin 2000, 96.

38 Shepard and Franklin 2000, 96.

39 Kropotkin 1967, 120–121; see also Kovalev 2005a, 220–251. According to Kovalev 2005a, 225–226 and 238, the Khazar coins appeared due to the decline in the production of dirhams during the 820s, the desire to attract Rus' merchants, as well as to provide coins for the population and visitors of the khaganate. An exception should, of course, be made for the special emission of 837/8, since it was linked to the ideology of power. The Khazars minted close imitations of Islamic dirhams up to the very end of the ninth century.

40 Kovalevskii 1956, 121.

41 Kovalevskii 1956, 141. On the relations between Volga Bulgaria and Khazaria and on the possibility of a military conflict between them regarding the adoption of Islam, see Stepanov 2006.

mentions only Muslim traders and tradesmen in Itil.[42] Until the Khazar capital is found, its significance for international trade can only be assessed on the basis of written sources.[43] And they portray Itil and Bolgar as part of one trade route. Assuming that Bolgar grew into a large center during the tenth century, it should be borne in mind that the accounts of Itil that speak of a Muslim trade community in it, refer to the same century. The earliest of these accounts belongs to Ibn Rustah (who wrote between 903 and 913).[44] Al-Masudi also tells of the constant movement of ships between the lands of the Bulgars and the Khazars.[45] It can be thus argued that Bolgar and Itil developed simultaneously as trade centers, located on the Volga and closely related to Middle Asia. The decreased significance or discontinuance of the dirham trade along the Caucasian-Don route could hardly have had a prominent effect on Khazaria, whose capital continued to be an important market center for Eastern trade. And the influence of Iranian and Middle Asian art on the Khazar art style of the first half of the tenth century shows that Itil retained its close contacts with the East.[46]

Even if the route along the Don had mostly lost its significance for Eastern trade, it continued to be used in the Khazar Khaganate. The appearance of Sarkel also changed. During the ninth century, it served the land trade between Europe and Asia and was part of the Silk Road. For this purpose, two caravanserais were erected in Sarkel, one of which was subsequently destroyed in the tenth century. By the early tenth century, silk from China was no longer

42 Zakhoder 1962, 155 and 188.

43 Excavations in the vicinity of Astrakhan (the Samosdelka hillfort) in recent years have given grounds for the assertion that Itil has been found. This can be neither confirmed nor rejected until the study of a larger part of the hillfort is completed in the next few archaeological seasons. See Zilivinskaia and Vasilev 2006. Especially noteworthy is the evidence of a sizeable presence of Bulgar population in Samosdelka during the ninth to tenth centuries, whose pottery is similar to that of the Volga Bulgars (Zilivinskaia and Vasilev 2006, 52).

44 Zahoder 1962, 186. Konovalova 2000, 129 stresses that accounts of a water route between Itil and Bolgar first appear during the tenth century in the works of Al-Istakhri and Ibn Hawqal. They indicate that this route became busier by the mid-tenth century. Al-Balkhi, Al-Istakhri and Ibn Hawqal all emphasize the significance of Khazaria, Byzantium and Danube Bulgaria for the Rus' merchants (Dunlop 1967, 99; Garkavi 1870, 221 and 277). Ibn Rustah mentions the trade between the Khazars, Volga Bulgars and the Rus', as well as the fact that the Rus' sold their slaves in Itil and Bolgar (Garkavi 1870, 263 and 267).

45 Quoted from Darkevich 1976, 149.

46 Pletneva 1996, 155.

imported to Europe, with Byzantium being the main exporter.[47] Silk was of interest to Rus' trade with Byzantium[48] and probably prompted the gradual movement of the Rus' south towards the Middle Dnieper and their subsequent settlement in Kiev. In R. Kovalev's opinion, the destruction of the Sarkel caravanserais circa the year 900 was caused by problems along the trade route along the Severski Donets after the Pecheneg invasion. He believes that during the tenth century, the international route along the Severski Donets was no longer in use.[49] However, assuming that there actually were any caravanserais, only one of the two, situated in Sarkel, was destroyed. During the tenth century, the road along the Don that connected the Azov region and the Crimea with the Bulgaro-Alanian settlements along the Severski Donets, the Middle and the Upper Don, as well as with the Viatichi in the north, grew in significance within the Khazar Khaganate. The ties between this part of Khazaria and Itil also strengthened.[50]

Until recently it could be argued that the change in significance of the road along the Don and the Severski Donets was also evidenced by the development of the Maiaki settlement (on the Severski Donets), which fell into decline at the end of the ninth century and a century later was no longer a large economic center of the Saltovo culture.[51] However, as already stated, excavations from the last few years reveal that it was displaced by the Sidorovo hillfort.[52] A. Tortika believes that the road along the Severski Donets was not part of the international trade routes in Eastern Europe either during the ninth century, or during the tenth. In his opinion, there is no conclusive evidence that this road continued west towards Kiev.[53] Even if this was so, the Khazar fortresses, located 20–30 km apart (a distance equal to a day's march) indicate that the main route did not continue westwards from the Severski Donets, but eastwards along the Tikhaia Sosna River and towards the upper reaches of the Don.[54]

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47 Pletneva 1996, 154–156. According to Kovalev 2005b, 81–84, the Sarkel caravanserai complex was the third largest among the known Middle Asian caravanserais, contemporary to Sarkel. This shows the significance of the settlement in the system of international trade. Flerov 2002, 155 disputes the existence of caravanserais in Sarkel.

48 Shepard and Franklin 2000, 176.

49 Kovalev 2005b, 104–105.

50 These issues concern the internal development of the Khazar Khaganate and are examined in greater detail in chapter 4.5.

51 Mikheev 1985, 23–24.

52 Kravchenko 2004, 266.

53 Tortika 2006b, 29–37; see in particular Tortika 2006a, 430–497.

54 See for instance Kovalev 2005b, 87–92; this topic is discussed in more detail in chapter 4.4.

The Rus' penetration of Eastern Europe did not have such importance for the development of the Dnieper road as did the Byzantine policy in the north during the second half of the ninth century. During the Iconoclast period (726–843), the influx of Byzantine coins dropped sharply and it could be asserted that until the 830s Byzantium did not have a significant influence on the Northern Black Sea region.[55] The reign of the Byzantine emperor Michael III (843–867) dissipated the disputes that polarized the Byzantine society and revived the missionary activity. The rise of Byzantium began after 856, when Michael III ousted his mother from the regency council with the help of his uncle Bardas. Bardas restored secular education by creating the Magnaura School. In 858, the Magnaura teacher Photios ascended the patriarchal throne (858–867, 877–886).[56] During his time in office, the Khazar (860–861) and the Great Moravian (863) missions of the saint brothers Cyril and Methodius became possible, as well as Bulgaria's conversion to Christianity in 864. The first accounts of the spread of Christianity from Byzantium among the Rus' date from 867.[57]

The Byzantine center in the Northern Black Sea region was Chersonesus. It was located on the southwest coast of the Crimean Peninsula. The settlement was an important port, situated on the direct sea route that began at the mouths of the Danube and ran through the Dnieper towards the Caucasus. It provided Byzantium with goods from the Northern Black Sea region—furs, honey, wax, slaves, fish and salt. Of particular importance both for Chersonesus and for Byzantium were the contacts with the peoples, inhabiting the steppe. Not only because they mediated in the trade with the northern areas (in the ninth century, such a role was played by the Magyars and in the tenth, the Pechenegs), but because the city was vulnerable from the direction of the steppe as it was located far from the main mountain ridge of the peninsula. Twenty kilometers eastwards, situated deep in the mountains, was the center of the Crimean Goths, Doros (the Goths had settled there after the Hunnic invasion). Being

55 Darkevich 1973, 95. This mainly concerned trade and the direct political influence of Byzantium and did not impact the spread of Christianity among the population subject to the Khazar Khaganate. The spread of Christianity can also be largely associated with the iconodules that were banished from Byzantium and found refuge in the Crimea. On the Byzantine-Khazar relations in the Crimea during the seventh and eighth centuries, see Naumenko 2004b.

56 Ostrogorski 1996, 304–307.

57 On the Byzantine missionary work, see Ivanov 2001. See also Stepanov 2005a, 73–74 and 84; Naumenko 2005.

Christians and subjects of Byzantium throughout the larger part of their history, they defended their city from attacks from the north.[58]

During the ninth century, commercial ties between the Rus' and Chersonesus were weak. The road from Scandinavia to the Black Sea along the Dnieper developed only at the end of the century, and besides, Chersonesus could not compete with the large market centers of the East. Much more important during this period were the Khazar centers in the Crimea and on the Taman Peninsula, like Samkerts (Tmutarakan), Bosporus and Phanagoria. Chersonesus began to rise into prominence during the second half of the century and minted its own coins from 866/867 till the end of the tenth century. But even during the tenth century trade between the city and the Rus' was not very developed. The Pechenegs were the main intermediary between them.[59]

Relations between the Rus' and Byzantium in the south were conducted directly through Constantinople. From the beginning of the tenth century, these relations became more and more important to Kievan Rus'. The Rus' state thus turned towards Byzantium, which reached its greatest power during the second half of the tenth century and the early eleventh century. At the same time, traditional allied relations between Byzantium and Khazaria deteriorated.[60] The causes for this can be sought in the Khazars' constant attempts to revive the trade ties with the Abbasids by supporting them in their fight against the Deilemites. The Abbasids were the main enemy of Byzantium on its eastern border. Byzantine-Rus' trade largely hindered contacts between the Khazars and Western Europe. Probably because of this the Khazar Khaganate strengthened its ties with the Islamic world. The Khazar Khaganate kept its influence in the Crimea and the Taman Peninsula, thus controlling a considerable part of the Black Sea trade. There is no evidence that the Khazars had any direct contacts with Constantinople or Danube Bulgaria. There is circumstantial evidence regarding the city of Trabzon, where, according to Al-Masudi, "merchants assembled from all nations—Byzantines, Moslems, Armenians,

58 Obolenski 2001, 42–46; during the second half of the ninth century and in the tenth century, the territory of Crimean Gothia was ruled by the Khazar Khaganate. It contained one of the largest Khazar centers, Mangup (Doros) (Baranov 1990, 58). See also Gertsen 2002.

59 Iakobson 1973, 58; Shepard and Franklin 2000, 137–138.

60 Persecutions against Jews in Byzantium during the reign of the Byzantine emperor Romanos I Lekapenos (919–944) could have been a significant cause, but also a consequence of the Byzantine-Khazar conflict. They are also mentioned in the *Cambridge Document*, which links the Byzantine policy with the Rus'-Khazar confrontation in the Crimea in 939–940. According to Al-Masudi, many Byzantine Jews fled to Khazaria. See for instance, Golb and Pritsak 1997, 141 and 163–164.

and others from the country of Kashak (Kasogs)—i.e., from the region of the Khazar sphere of influence".[61]

The growth of Kiev during the tenth century raises a further question. At the time when the Upper Volga hoards with dirhams began to decline, they started to increase in the area around the Middle Dnieper and on the right bank of the river.[62] According to T. Noonan, Kiev's initial stage of development as a city is related to the changes in Eastern trade during the tenth century (the first dirhams that have been found in the area around the Middle Dnieper are Samanid ones). At the same time, it is not quite clear by which road the dirhams reached the Middle Dnieper. The scholar believes that two roads were used: from Volga Bulgaria along the Oka and from Khazaria along the Severski Donets. The ties between Kiev and the East were active during the first half of the tenth century, but "growing conflicts between the Rus' of Kiev and the Khazars may have disrupted Kiev's participation in the Islamic trade during the second quarter of the tenth century, a development that was accentuated by the growing trade between Kiev and Constantinople".[63]

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61 Novosel'tsev 1990, 115. The Byzantine seals found in Sugdea indicate that the city had direct trade contacts with Constantinople and other Byzantine ports in Asia Minor (Aibabin and Makarova 2003, 59).

62 Noonan 2000a, 386.

63 Noonan 2000a, 388. The rift in relations between Khazaria and Byzantium is of significant importance for the break-away of the Rus' from the Khazar influence (the subordination of Kievan Rus' is noted by Gumilev 1997, 212, according to whom the threshold between the ninth and the tenth century marks the "culmination of the Judeo-Khazar power", as well as by J. Shepard, in whose opinion the trade routes indebted the Rus' to the Volga Bulgars and the Byzantines, as well as to the Khazars (Shepard and Franklin 2000, 166). During the tenth century, the main source of dirhams for the Rus' was Bolgar. At that time, Byzantium was attempting to draw the Rus' closer. This is evidenced in the text of the agreement between Byzantium and Rus' from 907 and their treaty from 911, after which the Rus' were exempted from customs duties in Constantinople (Shepard and Franklin 2000, 161–162 and 166). The Caspian campaigns of the early tenth century corresponded to the desire of the Rus' to obtain the necessary Arab dirhams. Their failure may have become an additional reason for the search of other markets (on this issue, see Zuckerman 1995, 269). The Rus' campaigns in the Caspian Sea, as well as the treaties with Byzantium, may perhaps indeed have been caused by the attempts of Khazaria and Byzantium to neutralize and use Kievan Rus' for their own political purposes. As stated in a letter by Patriarch Nicholas Mystikos (901–907, 912–925) to the Bulgarian Tsar Simeon (893–927), after 917 Byzantium tried to organize a coalition against Bulgaria, which included the Pechenegs, Magyars, Rus' and Alans (Zlatarski 1994, 247–249). Such a coalition could have also acted against Khazaria. The flow of dirhams towards Kiev began to decline around the mid-tenth century. At the same time, there is no evidence of a decline

If the aggravation of the relations between the Rus' and the Khazars was caused by the reduced inflow of dirhams to Kiev, this shows that the Khazar Khaganate was able to control the trade also along the route that connected Kiev with Volga Bulgaria through the Oka. A. Vinnikov assumes an increase in the commercial importance of the region around the Upper Don towards the Oka (the land of the Viatichi), through which the main part of the dirham inflow passed in the early tenth century.[64] Thus, the areas around the upper reaches of the Don and the Severski Donets, which were undeniably under Khazar control during the tenth century, could probably have affected the trade flow along the Oka. In general, it could be argued that the territory south of the Oka was subject to the Khazar Khaganate until the 960s. The direct commercial interests of the Volga Bulgars were also targeted along the Oka. Not incidentally, it is presumed that they had their own trading post in Murom itself.[65]

The connection to Kiev is important, because the land route from Western Europe towards the East passed through it. It was an extension of the route from Spain and France that passed through Regensburg, Prague, Krakow, Peremyshl and Kiev and led towards Sarkel and the Khazar capital Itil. In the late eighth century or the early ninth, its development was linked to the Radhanites, the Jewish merchants that served the land trade between Europe and the East.[66] *The Raffelstetten Customs Regulations*, written up between 903 and 906, show that the Rus' used this road during the ninth century.[67] According to some scholars, its importance increased in the tenth century when Jewish communities were established in many cities of Western Europe like Mainz, Augsburg, Regensburg and Prague. There is evidence that during the first half of the

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in the economic development of Kievan Rus', which by then was already completely directed towards Byzantium (Shepard and Franklin 2000, 209).

64 Vinnikov 1995, 69.

65 Dubov 1989, 140–143. The trade route that connected Bolgar and Kiev was probably also known to the Arab merchants already in the first half of the tenth century (according to the account of Al-Istakhri). It was used most intensively from the beginning of the eleventh century to the middle of the twelfth century. (Konovalova 2000, 132). A. Tortika also believes that this road was used during the first half or the middle of the tenth century. The scholar assumes as well that it was used both for trade with Bolgar and directly with Itil (Tortika 2006b, 32 and 2006a, 460–461). See also Belorybkin 1986.

66 Gumilev 1997, 153; Pashuto 1968, 138; Simeonova 2006, 23–25.

67 Nazarenko 1994, 25–26 and 2001, 80–82. The idea behind the Regulations was to ratify the rules that existed during the time of Louis the German (840–876) and Carloman (876–880) (Shepard and Franklin 2000, 135; Nazarenko 2001, 108).

tenth century, Kiev also had a Jewish community. It is presumed that it also included population of Khazar origin.[68] In A. Nazarenko's opinion, the Jews that mostly dealt with slave trade played a leading role along the road that connected Western Europe with Khazaria. These Jews were the Radhanites that Ibn Khordadbeh described in the late ninth century. The use of the route during the tenth century is evidenced by the correspondence between Hasdai ibn Shaprut and the Khazar ruler Joseph.[69]

According to L. Gumilev, the Radhanites monopolized the land trade between China and Europe. The Jewish community of Khazaria also depended on international trade. In L. Gumilev's opinion, the Radhanites and the Vikings had common commercial interests in Western Europe (especially with regard to the Viking plunders which provided slaves); such common interests can also be traced in Eastern Europe in the form of the interaction between the Varangians and the Khazars. The Jewish communities were connected in a huge commercial organization that formed a unified whole along the roads from Europe to China.[70] Thus, in L. Gumilev's opinion, the Khazar Khaganate was a state that served Jewish trade.

As has already been noted, the account regarding the Radhanites belongs to Ibn Khordadbeh and refers to the ninth century. It reveals that they came from Spain and France, that one of their centers was situated in North Africa and that one of their routes sometimes ran across Khazaria, before continuing on towards Middle Asia.[71] With the help of the coins, minted in Africa, T. Kalinina attempts to determine the route of the Radhanites and the time period during which they traded in Eastern Europe. The largest amount of African coins came to Eastern Europe between the late eighth century and the first quarter of the ninth century. They reached as far as the Baltic coast but were

68 Golb and Pritsak 1997, 36 and 53–58.

69 Nazarenko 1994, 26–27. Nazarenko 2001, 101–108 presumes that the Magyar invasion from the end of the ninth century created problems for this trade route and it was moved further north. The scholar believes this to be one of the reasons for the growth of Prague as an economic and political center.

70 Gumilev 1997, 153–155.

71 Nazarenko 1994, 26–27; Kalinina 1986, 79 and 2000, 111–113. According to Gil 1974, the Radhanites did not reach France or Germany in the west, but Italy, where the region of Firanja, mentioned by Ibn Khordadbeh, was situated. He believes that the center of the Radhanites was in Iraq and their name derives from a local toponym. They did not constitute an organized group. The only thing common between them was their place of origin. On the Radhanites, see also Stepanov 2006, 532–534; Simeonova 2006, 137.

most common along the Don and the Severski Donets.[72] The other route, through which dirhams minted mostly in Asia reached Khazaria, is not connected with the Radhanites. The information about it is provided by Ibn al-Faqih.[73] It can be concluded that the Radhanites traded until the mid-ninth century and did not use all the land routes between Europe and Asia.

According to T. Noonan, since "the Rādhāniyyah do not appear to have been mentioned in later sources, it is possible that the emergence of the Rūs-Khazar-Islamic trade starting in the late eighth-early ninth centuries somehow disrupted and perhaps even replaced this northern route of the Rādhāniyyah".[74] In J. Shepard's view, the arrival of the Magyars in Central Europe disrupted the trade relations between the eastern and the western part of the continent, which affected the activity of the Radhanites.[75] The defeat of the Magyars by Otto I in 955 and the subsequent efforts by Byzantine and German missionaries opened up opportunities for steady trading with Central Europe via the Danube.[76]

A. Novosel'tsev, in whose opinion trade in the Khazar Khaganate lay solely in the hands of the Jewish merchants, does not believe that the Khazars had any direct trade relations with Western or Central Europe. He justifies his assertion with the difficulties with the establishment of a connection between the Khazar ruler Joseph and Hasdai ibn Shaprut who learned about Khazaria only shortly before he wrote his letter (probably in the 950s).[77] V. Petrukhin is of a similar point of view. According to him, the Khazar Khaganate was isolated from the Judaic communities outside the Byzantine Mediterranean. This is supported by the correspondence between Joseph and Hasdai ibn Shaprut, which became possible after the Rus' Princess Olga established relations with Western Europe during the 950s. Kievan Rus' isolated rather than connected the Khazars with Western Europe.[78]

The theory, intrinsic to Soviet science, according to which "the rulers of Itil grew rich precisely due to trade with the world centers of slavery Baghdad and

72 Kalinina 1986, 79.

73 Kalinina 1986, 81–82.

74 Noonan 1992, 250. In Kalinina's opinion, the excerpt on the Rus' merchants in the work of Ibn Khordadbeh possibly indicates that in the Eastern European lands trade was handled not by the Radhanites, but by the Rus' (Kalinina 2000, 113). According to Pritsak 1981a, 25, the Radhanite commercial activity in Europe spanned the years between 750 and 830.

75 Shepard and Franklin 2000, 135.

76 Shepard and Franklin 2000, 215; see also Simeonova 2006, 136–137.

77 Novosel'tsev 1990, 115.

78 Petrukhin 2005, 76.

Cordoba"[79] is quite inaccurate. Also: "By the mid-tenth century [...] Khazaria's economy relied solely on the broad international trade relations, established with near and distant peoples and lands. Transit trade played a major role in this [...] Khazaria turned into a typical parasitic state [...] a small parasitic khanate that hindered the economic development of neighboring countries and disrupted their trade with the East".[80] Following the Marxist explanatory model, M. Artamonov seeks the reasons for this in Khazaria's Judaization. "From this moment on, the government lost its contact with the people and in place of stock-breeding and agriculture came the era of transit trade and the parasitic enrichment of the ruling elite".[81] It can hardly be seriously argued that agriculture and stock-breeding ceased to develop in the first half of the ninth century, when the Khazar elite adopted Judaism.

P. Golden does not accept M. Artamonov's view, believing it to be "an arbitrary assumption not corroborated by historical facts".[82] He justifies his position with the traditions of the nomad peoples. The centralized states that they created (including the Khazar Khaganate and the Golden Horde) ensured the security of trade in exchange for the customs duties they received.[83] Overall, it is generally accepted that trade with agricultural societies was more important for the Eurasian nomads than for the farmers themselves. The nomads considered trade a prestigious occupation and were prepared to assert their right to access the markets of the sedentary societies by military means, if necessary.[84]

International caravan trade that passed through the steppe was carried out by merchants from sedentary countries that specialized in this activity, such as the Sogdians who ruled the trade in the Turkic Khaganate. The road north that passed through the Khazar Khaganate, was probably created by merchants from Khwarezm and the countries, subordinate to the Arab Caliphate. "Caravan trade was always linked first and foremost to the political and economic situation in a wide outside world, which sometimes comprised several continents. Nomads could sometimes join in this trade, utilizing it in their own interests. But, as a rule, they neither created this trade, nor did they determine its development and its fortune".[85] These words are, of course, more appropriate for the Pechenegs than for the Khazar Khaganate, which undoubtedly

79 Gumilev 1997, 225.
80 Pletneva 1976, 68–69
81 Artamonov 1962, 457.
82 Golden 1980, 111.
83 Golden 1980, 110.
84 Khazanov 1975, 256.
85 Khazanov 1994, 211.

inherited many structures, as well as the conduct of most nomadic groups from previous centuries; however, in the ninth and tenth centuries it could not be defined as a typical nomadic state.

Khazaria housed several trade centers that were large for their time and attracted diverse peoples. In some places, like for example in Itil, merchants and Muslim tradesmen (an interesting fact is that sources on Itil do not mention Jewish traders) lived in a segregated quarter. But to what extent was trade decisive for the economy of the Khazar Khaganate? In the tenth century, the importance of the land caravan route that led from Western Europe across the Northern Black Sea coast and the Caucasus towards Middle Asia and China waned. At the same time, Khazaria did not seem to experience any significant economic downturn. Archaeological research has yet to bring more clarity on this issue.

According to D. Dunlop, "the prosperity of Khazaria evidently depended less on the resources of the country than on its favorable position across important trade-routes".[86] Interpreting the accounts of Al-Istakhri and Al-Masudi, as well as the letter of the Khazar ruler Joseph, the scholar reaches the conclusion that in the mid-tenth century the country prospered.[87] Does this mean that it also retained its control over the important trade routes?

P. Golden also sees Khazaria as a commercial state. In his opinion, its economy was based on revenues from customs duties. They depended on the ability of the khaganate to control trade routes. For this purpose, during the ninth and tenth centuries the Khazar rulers kept a hired army with money from the trade income. Since the subordinate territories gradually decreased, so did the revenues from customs duties, until it became difficult to maintain a hired army. Thus the structure which supported the Khazar state collapsed in the second half of the tenth century.[88]

We cannot be certain that the changes in international trade during the tenth century led to the weakening of Khazaria. There is no doubt that during the tenth century, the Khaganate lost the Dnieper River Valley, along with a large part of the Black Sea steppe. However, the connection to Western Europe, which passed through Kiev, was not particularly active during the ninth century. Even assuming that the Pechenegs disturbed trade relations and caused a northward shift in the route, the Khazar authority over the Viatichi (i.e. over a large part of the road along the Oka) and some of the Ugrian tribes in this region cannot be denied. It is also highly unlikely that the Volga Bulgars

86 Dunlop 1967, 232.

87 Dunlop 1967, 241.

88 Golden 1980, 111.

became completely independent before the mid-tenth century (and possibly not even until the 960s). Khazar trade centers in the Crimea and the Taman Peninsula like Bosporus and Samkerts or Itil, and possibly also Samandar, did not decline in the tenth century. On the contrary—or at least in the case of Itil—perhaps they even gained further prominence. Therefore, no matter what losses Khazaria suffered, they were not essential for its control over the routes of Eastern trade.

T. Noonan associates the fall of Khazaria with its failure to deal with the consequences of the crisis in the dirham flow, caused by the Samanid state during the 950s. According to him, "when the Khazars could adapt to new conditions and exploit the commercial relationships between Islam and Eastern Europe, as they did following the crisis of 875–900, then they prospered. When the Khazars could no longer do this, as seems to have been the case after 950 with the onset of the silver crisis in Islam, then the economic basis of the Kaganate eroded and the Khazar state collapsed".[89] But why were the Khazars unable to adapt? It is true that this time the influx of silver from the East did not resume. The Rus', for example, turned their attention to the West European silver denarii, the access to which became possible after the 950s. The earliest hoard in Eastern Europe to contain denarii dates from 980. At the same time the influx of dirhams stopped completely only in the early eleventh century. The last dirhams to be minted by Volga Bulgars were from the end of the 980s.[90] These dates are too distant from the campaigns of Sviatoslav (the 960s) to have a direct relation to the fall of Khazaria. Moreover, dirhams were essential for the Rus' state, but the same thing cannot be said about Khazaria. Trade with the East continued to prosper,[91] only the dirham influx decreased,

89 Noonan 1985, 204.

90 Noonan 2000a, 382 and 391; Noonan 1980, 306. The development of Rus' cities poses an interesting problem in relation to changes in the trade of the mid-tenth century. The old trade centers that arose around the Eastern trade began to decline during this period and in their place or in their vicinity new princely centers were built. This process can be compared to the decline of some Scandinavian commercial centers, such as Birka. On the development of the Rus' cities, see Petrukhin and Pushkina 1979; Mel'nikova and Petrukhin 1986a and 1986b; Darkevich 1994, 10 and 43–60; Tolochko 1989. According to Nazarenko 2001, 75, "with the development of regional state structures and a local market the significance of long-distance trade gradually decreased; the open trade and handicraft villages of the type of the Baltic *viks*—a resemblance of long-distance international trade—fell into decline everywhere, making place for the "normal" early feudal cities both in North Europe and in its eastern parts".

91 Darkevich 1976, 149; Fekhner 1961 and 1982. The coins were only one of the commodities that were transported through Khazar territory. Furthermore, as will be seen in the

although the 950s were only the beginning of this process. There is no evidence that it affected the economy of Volga Bulgaria. Should it therefore be asserted that this decrease in dirhams affected Khazaria, which had a lesser interest in dirhams, at the very least because it did not mint its own coins or at least not in such quantities? The question, therefore, is to what extent did the Khazar economy depend on international trade during the tenth century?

According to T. Noonan, the viability of the Khazar Khaganate was based on a profitable international trade and a well-developed internal market, and the reason Khazaria survived for so long was that it had a mostly self-sufficient economy, which did not rely on imports. He assumes nonetheless that the shift of the main trade route from Khazaria towards Volga Bulgaria after 900 caused major losses for the Khazar treasury, thus undermining the political power of the khaganate. The Khazar economy could not cope with the reduced income from foreign trade.[92] But we really have no idea as to the degree of the khaganate's influence on international trade and to what extent the Khazars were "bypassed" by it in the tenth century! Crisis periods affect the development and capabilities of one country or another, but are not the sole factor that defines them. In this case, the crisis is general and refers to the supplies of silver, which in Eastern Europe affected mostly Kievan Rus' and Volga Bulgaria. So the question essentially is: why did the relatively highly developed economy of Khazaria fail to ensure the survival of the khaganate?

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chapter on the Khazar economy, some of these commodities were produced in various centers within Khazaria itself, from where they were distributed, together with the imported goods, along the international trade roads (on the various sorts of necklaces and beads, see for instance Kovalevskaia 2001 and 2002). On the slave trade, see Tortika 2006a, 347–429.

92 Noonan 2007, 243–244.

CHAPTER 4

The Khazar Economy: Economic Integration or Disintegration?

Two types of sources are used as a basis for the assessment of the Khazar Khaganate's economy: written and archaeological. They are extensively discussed mainly in the works of archaeologists (such as S. Pletneva, M. Magomedov, V. Mikheev and I. Baranov)[1] and numismatists (T. Noonan).[2] Most comprehensive historical works on Khazaria assign secondary importance to archaeology. If this is understandable for D. Dunlop,[3] given that until the late 1950s there were hardly any archaeological publications on the Saltovo culture (which still is not definitely bound to the Khazar state), it seems quite surprising in M. Artamonov's case.[4] Archaeological data is also missing from the later works of P. Golden and A. Novosel'tsev.[5] Many of the conclusions that can be reached exclusively through written sources are unreliable. Quite indicative is the opinion of T. Noonan, according to whom, "it is impossible to understand what happened in European Russia between ca. 500 and ca. 1000 using written sources alone".[6]

Research of Khazaria's archaeology is usually related to the Saltovo monuments which are regarded as the culture of the Khazar state.[7] This culture belonged to the three main ethnic groups in the khaganate: the Khazars, the Bulgars and the Alans. But even within its hypothetically smallest territory

1 See Pletneva 1967 and 1999; Magomedov 1983, 95–154; Mikheev 1985, 25–97; Baranov 1990, 69–104.

2 Noonan 1995–1997.

3 Dunlop 1967 (originally 1954).

4 Artamonov 1962.

5 Golden 1980; Novosel'tsev 1990. An original addition to Golden's work is the review of Balint 1981. According to Novosel'tsev 1990, 113, "For now, we can speak only in general terms about the Khazar economy, and primarily on the basis of written sources. Unfortunately, apart from some traits of the urban economy, archaeologists have yet to provide us with sufficient and, more importantly, with complex material on this issue." The monographs of Mikheev and Magomedov, which actually do not cover the whole territory of the khaganate, were published during the first half of the 1980s (see footnote 1 in this chapter) and later became the basis for Noonan's study of the Khazar economy (see footnote 2 in this chapter).

6 Noonan 2000b, 934.

7 Pletneva 1999, 3.

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Khazaria included numerous ethnic groups from the North Caucasus (that differed from the Bulgars, Khazars and the Alans living there), as well as Finno-Ugrian and Slavic tribes from the forest-steppe and forest zones of Eastern Europe. Thus, the question arises whether their material culture, which was different from the Saltovo one, should also be considered as part of the culture of the Khazar Khaganate. Also, do these communities facilitate the understanding of Khazaria's economy or did they have economies, independent from the khaganate?

During the first half of the tenth century, the Khazar Khaganate stretched over a vast territory that encompassed some major geographical and climatic zones of Eastern Europe (parts of the steppe and forest-steppe zones, as well as parts of the Black Sea and Caspian Sea coasts; the basins of two of the largest rivers in Eastern Europe, the Don and the Volga, together with their tributaries; mountainous and hilly areas north of the main Caucasus ridge and in the Crimea). This predetermined a wide variety of economic activities in the khaganate, as can be seen in the written sources and is evident from the archaeological ones. This diversity is not due to ethnic differences and often represents a trait of the economy of the same ethnic community (the Bulgars for example).

A major problem in the assessment of the Khazar economy is the fact that the vast territory of the khaganate has not been studied evenly by archaeologists. For some large areas there is a total lack of written sources. The area of the Saltovo culture along the Don basin in the steppe and forest-steppe zones alone encompassed some 500 000 sq. km.[8] So far, more than 700 monuments have been found there.[9] Many of them have yet to be studied and the results of most excavations have not been published.[10] In the words of S. Pletneva: "the data, obtained with such financial, physical, intellectual and spiritual efforts, lies immobile on the shelves of archives and storehouses [...] even the perfectly well studied areas and groups of monuments in the Don Steppe remain little known to specialists".[11] Large parts of the Don basin itself north of Sarkel have not been studied at all, especially on the left side of the river, along its major tributaries Khoper and Medveditsa. Thus, "tens of thousands of square kilometers in the Volga-Don Interfluve remain "terra incognita" for all medieval archaeologists [...], although it is quite possible that precisely that area hides the answers to many questions we have about the history and culture

8 Pletneva 1999, 129 and 1989, 7.

9 Pletneva 1999, 25, 73, and 85.

10 Pletneva 1999, 14, 29, 75, and 115.

11 Pletneva 1999, 131.

of the Khazars and other peoples that led a nomadic or sedentary life in these fertile and rich lands".[12]

Even though only a small part of the research on the Saltovo monuments has been released so far, the published material gives a general idea of the Khazar economy. It is sufficient for drawing the necessary conclusions, especially since there are no significant differences between the western areas of the khaganate (the Crimea, the coastal area of the Sea of Azov and the Don Valley) and the remotely situated Dagestan. The study of the Khazar Saltovo monuments (i.e. from the Khazar Khaganate) makes use of data from Danube Bulgaria and Volga Bulgaria, as well as from Alania. This is usually done to show the ethnic similarity between the population of certain areas of Khazaria and the people of these countries, though not to look for common traits in their economic development, despite their cultures being close and in many ways similar to one another. The northwest Cis-Caucasian Region, inhabited by the Kasogs (Zikhs), remains entirely outside the scope of the research on Khazaria, although data on two necropoles in this territory (Dyurso and Borisovo) indicates the presence of a population, related to the Saltovians.[13]

Practically the same can be said about the Slavic and Finno-Ugrian population in the forest-steppe zone. There is almost no archaeological data on the Finno-Ugrians in the Khazar Khaganate. Written sources, referring to the Burtas (most often seen as the ancestors of today's Mordovians), could be used in this direction. Slavic monuments in the forest-steppe zone (the Romny-Borshevo culture) and especially the settlements, situated in the immediate vicinity of the Saltovo ones, are of particular interest due to the presence of Saltovo population in them. The monographs of A. Vinnikov and A. Moskalenko make it possible to trace the development and the relationship between the Saltovo and Slavic population in the Don Valley.[14] There is no detailed information regarding the area west of the Severski Donets, among the Romny monuments and especially in the valleys of the rivers Vorskla, Psel (where the Bititsa hillfort, regarded as the administrative center of the khaganate, is situated)

12 Pletneva 1999, 83.

13 Pletneva 1999, 15 and 48; Gadlo 1989; of particular interest is the dual ritualism of the necropoles (the presence of both inhumation and cremation burials). Similar burials and inventory (adornments) have been found on the upper reaches of the Severski Donets and in the Volga Cis-Ural forest-steppe region (see for instance Mikheev 1982; Aksenov 1998, 2004b, 2007, and 2008; Aksenova 2007). It is important to bear in mind that the dual ritualism necropoles in Dyurso and Borisovo have a parallel in Danube Bulgaria (Dimitrov 1987, 84–86); see also Dmitriev 2003; Gavritukhin and P'iankov 2003.

14 Moskalenko 1981; Vinnikov 1995.

and the Sula.[15] Slavic settlements were also situated among the Saltovo ones in the Kharkov area.[16]

In most cases, the theories on the development of the nomadic state play a significant role in the assessment of the Khazar economy. D. Dunlop and P. Golden see the economy of Khazaria as a typically nomadic one, with underdeveloped agricultural and handicraft sectors and a strong dependence on international trade.[17] Their conclusions are based solely on written sources and chiefly on the accounts of Eastern writers. It should however be borne in mind that they are far from exhaustive and refer mainly to the eastern lands of Khazaria—the areas around Itil and Samandar. The information about the economy of the western Khazar lands comes mostly from archaeological data. The Eastern authors do talk about developed agricultural areas in Khazaria, but since Al-Istakhri explicitly states that Khazaria did not produce anything except isinglass, it is generally presumed that the agricultural and handicraft products were not enough to ensure the self-sufficient existence of the Khazar economy.[18] At the same time, D. Dunlop assumes that if the Khazars had more natural resources and an inclination for manufacturing activities, they could have managed to "win back by diplomacy or reconquer piecemeal the revolted peoples and gradually to reestabilish their political and commercial system in their former territory. These conditions were, however, lacking".[19] But was such a possibility truly improbable?

Through written and archaeological data, T. Noonan reaches quite a contrary conclusion. According to him, stock-breeding, agriculture and handicrafts

15 Vinnikov 1995, 131; see also Berezovets 1965 and 1973; Sukhobokov, Voznesenskaia, and Priimak 1989; Sukhobokov 2004; Romashov 2002–2003, 161.

16 Pletneva 1989, 7.

17 Dunlop 1967, 224, 228, and 231–234; Golden 1980, 106 and 111. Golden 1980, 106 also notes accounts of a developed agriculture and urban life in Khazaria. Besides the revenues from trade, sources also mention other resources for the upkeep of the army. For instance, according to a comment from *Derbent-Name*, the Khazar armies in the Caucasus region supported themselves from gold and silver mines (Dunlop 1967, 227); see also the text of *Derbent–Name* in Orazaev 1993, 19. The development of silver mines in the Caucasus between the eighth and the ninth centuries has been verified archaeologically (Kovalevskaia 1981, 85).

18 Dunlop 1967, 228–232. Already in 1962, Zakhoder 1962, 141–142 regarded the Khazar society as sedentary or semi-sedentary, basing his assumptions on the information from written sources. Nomadism developed in various regions of the steppe zone, which were not intersected by major river routes, although a tendency towards sedentary agriculture, combined with hunting and fishing, was evident even there.

19 Dunlop 1967, 234.

were equally well-developed in Khazaria. The diversity of the Khazar economy was its strength, which ensured the existence of the khaganate for a period of roughly three centuries—an impressive amount of time for a nomadic state.[20] The revenues of the Khazar state were sufficient and it was not dependant on international trade.

Such a vivid contrast in conclusions is due not only to the written sources, which are inconclusive, but also to the different notions of the scholars regarding the nature of the nomadic state and, respectively, its economy. Theories on the sedentarization processes among the nomads are also directly related to this topic. Under what circumstances did they occur and towards what kind of development did they lead? What was the nature of a nomadic society that had been through a period of large-scale sedentarization? To what extent were the sedentarization processes irreversible and what were the conditions they depended on? To what degree did stock-breeding and agriculture interact in such a society and, finally, what definition should be given to the Khazar state, if its agricultural sector had become equally relevant or even predominant in its economy? There are several approaches in exploring the answers to such questions.

4.1 Theoretical Basis of the Models and Development of the Nomadic Economy

A typical approach of Soviet archaeology is the evolutionary one, according to which nomads go through several stages of development before settling down permanently. In the case of the Khazar Khaganate, this approach is best articulated by S. Pletneva.[21] The first stage of nomadism is the camp or year-round nomadism when the whole population migrates together with its herds in search for suitable pastures. This stage includes large-scale migrations, usually in the form of invasions, in search of new territories, suitable for inhabitation.[22] The second stage has two varieties: a semi-nomadic and a semi-sedentary one. The first one is defined as similar to camp nomadism, while the second one "in its essence represents an almost entirely sedentary lifestyle".[23] During this stage the territory used for pasture decreases, and the pastures themselves are

20 Noonan 1995–1997, 293–296; see also Noonan's criticism of the theory D. Dunlop in Noonan 2007, 207–208.

21 Pletneva 1967 and 1982.

22 Pletneva 1982, 14–15.

23 Pletneva 1982, 36.

divided into summer and winter ones. Initially, the so-called *kuren*[24] form of nomadism emerged, followed by the *aul* one, during which parts of the impoverished population remained in the winter pastures even during summer (with time these turned into permanent settlements, referred to as *stoibishcha*, 'stopping places' or herding camps). This impoverished population began to engage in agriculture and in some cases—also in handicrafts (such as pottery-making).[25] It is this from of nomadic economy in both its varieties that is considered inherent to the initial stage of settlement of the Bulgar population in the Don area, which according to S. Pletneva began in the eighth century.[26]

"The third stage of nomadism is actually not "nomadism" in the fullest sense of the word. By this stage, the major part of the population had already become sedentary and was involved in agriculture and in various handicrafts [...] At first it was obviously [...] only the old and the ailing, i.e. people that were actually unable to migrate [...] the poorest members of the nomadic societies. They were the ones who, in order to survive, began to plow the ground, adjacent to the winter camps, creating vegetable patches, gardens and fields".[27] In Khazaria, this stage began during the eighth century. According to S. Pletneva, an exact chronological threshold between the second and third stage of nomadism cannot be accurately set. She assumes that all three types of the nomadic economy coexisted between the eighth and the ninth centuries. Thus, the sedentary Khazar society preserved both varieties of the second stage of the nomadic economy (the *kuren* and *aul* one). At the same time, S. Pletneva speaks of a permanent sedentariness among the population.[28] At the final stage of nomadism the nomads could no longer call themselves nomads, since by then only the elite of the society was involved in nomadic pastoralism. "The majority of the population was agricultural, and also bred various types of livestock, quite often in the form of transhumance (in Alpine pastures in the foothills and in the steppes, along the upper reaches of rivers, where meadows were vast and rich in succulent greenery)", says S. Pletneva.[29]

In her last, summarizing work, S. Pletneva allows for another possible explanation of the development of the Bulgar population's economy along the

24 *Kuren* is a term, borrowed from the thirteenth-century Eastern writer Rashid Al-Din, that denotes the positioning of the tribe in a circle with the elder situated in the middle (Pletneva 1967, 69).

25 Pletneva 1982, 37–38.

26 Pletneva 1982, 52; Pletneva 1967, 13–19 and 181.

27 Pletneva 1982, 77–78.

28 Pletneva 1967, 19–20 and 181.

29 Pletneva 1982, 78–79.

middle reaches of the Severski Donets. For this region, the evolutionary approach is presented by K. Krasil'nikov.[30] According to S. Pletneva, there is no data to support the notion that the early pasture settlements (*stoibishcha*) appeared before the sedentary ones. Her assumption is that the sedentary population, which engaged in transhumance, had summer pastures.[31]

Already in Soviet times the evolutionary approach was subject to doubt by some ethnologists. Thus, instead of talking about stages of development, A. Khazanov speaks only of types and varieties of nomadism. His classification identifies five basic forms of nomadic pastoralism, the first three of which are varieties of year-round migration with no permanent settlements. Of particular interest are the fourth and fifth forms, which are identified as typical for the Eurasian Steppe:[32]

"4. The whole population leads a nomadic life in spring, summer and fall, migrating in a meridional or vertical direction, and returns to its permanents dwellings in winter. Agriculture is practiced alongside nomadic pastoralism, but only as a supplementary part of the economy.

5. Part of the population is nomadic during a greater or lesser period of the year, migrating in a meridional or vertical direction, while the other leads a sedentary life and engages mainly in agriculture".[33]

These two forms of nomadic pastoralism are defined as semi-nomadic. Further on A. Khazanov explicitly states that to view these types of nomadism as consecutive stages in the development of the nomadic economy would be inaccurate.[34] The scholar also rejects the theory that the *kuren* form of nomadism subsequently gave rise to the *aul* type. According to him, the account of Rashid Al-Din refers to a specific kind of building structure, used in case of danger, which concurs with the Eastern historian's own explanation.[35]

G. Markov reaches a similar conclusion during the 1970s. He also draws attention to the defensive purpose of the nomadic camp's circular structure, adding that "elements of a social organization, similar to the *kuren* one, have existed among all nomadic stock-breeders during every period of their history".[36] In G. Markov's view, a nomadic or semi-nomadic economy occurs only when the basis for a nomadic society's existence is extensive pastoralism, accompanied

30 Krasil'nikov 1981.
31 Pletneva 1999, 74–75.
32 Khazanov 1975, 10–11.
33 Khazanov 1975, 11.
34 Khazanov 1975, 13.
35 Khazanov 1975, 269.
36 Markov 1976, 57.

by seasonal migrations. In a semi-sedentary society stock-breeding represents a separate sector (which is tended to by herdsmen), equal in importance or subordinate to agriculture.[37]

According to A. Khazanov, agriculture plays a dominant role in a semi-sedentary economy. Seasonal migrations of individual stock-breeding groups or families can occur. However, their advances are shorter in distance compared to the migrations of a semi-nomadic society, exposed to the same environmental conditions.[38]

Another type of a stock-breeding economy, where the majority of the population leads a sedentary way of life, is the migratory grazing (transhumance), during which the pastures and cattle are tended by herdsmen. Occasionally, the pastures are remotely located from the settlements. Stock-breeding continues to be an important sector of the economy, which in turn can be described as mixed. A version of this type of pastoralism is mountain grazing (transhumance or yayla-type stock-breeding). In summer, herds graze in high mountain pastures, moving to the lowlands in winter. Such a type of stock-breeding can exist together with semi-nomadism or nomadism.[39]

According to A. Khazanov, the nomadic economy is unstable and is affected by climate changes and diseases which affect cattle. It therefore rarely produces the necessary surplus for trade with sedentary communities, thus making the nomads dependent on their contacts with them. The development of a nomadic state is determined by its ability to provide a regular supply of agricultural and handicraft products.[40] These can be obtained through plunder or taxes (tributes), taken from subordinate agricultural societies that have retained their economic and socio-political structure. There is also direct taxation on the subordinate agricultural society whose lands have been acquired, the conquerors inheriting the system that existed prior to the land acquisition. Another possibility is the creation of agricultural and handicraft sectors by the nomads themselves, but usually only after they have moved an agricultural and artisan population on their territory.[41]

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37 Markov 1976, 9–10.

38 Khazanov 1994, 21.

39 Khazanov 1994, 22–24. It is impossible to describe all the various types of nomadic pastoralism in this book. It is however important to bear in mind that often one community could have different practices that can be attributed to both a semi-sedentary and a semi-nomadic economy. The literature concerning these issues is extensive; see for instance Erdélyi 2000; Kradin 2001a, 74–91; Kal'onski 2007, 230–245.

40 Khazanov 1994, 203–206.

41 Khazanov 1994, 224–225.

The methods for providing the necessary products for a nomadic society determine several types of development for the nomadic states. With the first one, the sedentary society or state retain their autonomy, their dependence consisting only in the payment of taxes. In other cases the farmers and nomads share a state and a common territory, but do not live in the same settlements. The nomads begin to gradually settle down and cities are built, becoming administrative, commercial and craft centers. It is possible for the nomadic society to continue the sedentarization process and eventually to become urban-agricultural, but this can also lead to the decline in significance of agriculture and handicrafts, to urban decay and the disintegration of the state itself.[42] The sedentary societies' subordination, expressed in tribute-payment, is most common in nomadic states. The nobility of the agricultural societies is preserved, but its interests are often opposite to those of the nomadic nobility. This way, there are two privileged strata in the state. This is often seen as one of the reasons for the instability of nomadic states. Their further development leads to a greater integration of the agricultural and stock-breeding population and to the merging of the two privileged strata.[43]

With the second type of development, which sometimes evolves from the first one, some of the nomads and farmers (usually the nobility) gradually integrate, forming a single socio-political and sometimes economic system. The nomads and farmers live in the same ecological zones. And with the third type of development, a single political and socio-economic system is built, based on division of labor between the stock-breeders and farmers. The nomadic state can also develop through inner settlement without the conquest or subjugation of an agricultural population. Such a change can also be caused by a religious movement.[44]

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42 Khazanov 1994, 231–232. The theory that the development of the steppe ("nomadic") society is highly dependent on relations with the so-called external (sedentary) world is accepted by many historians. See for instance Barfield 2001a and 2001b; Kradin 1994; Kradin 2001b; Kradin 2001a, 29–40 and 95–137; Kradin and Skrynnikova 2006, 29–55 and 119–125.

43 Khazanov 1975, 163–164 and 190–191.

44 Khazanov 1994, 232–233. According to Kradin and Skrynnikova 2006, 54–55, a distinction should be made between the classic "nomadic empires" and the quite similar agricultural and stock-breeding empires, in whose history stock-breeding played a major role. Examples of such empires include the Arab Caliphate, the Seljuk state, Danube and Volga Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire. He defines three models of nomadic empires that reflect the relations between the agricutural and the nomadic societies. In the first one, the nomads exploit the farmers through occasional raids or by taking "gifts". The second type implies that the farmers are dependent on the nomads and pay them taxes. And with

T. Noonan also rejects the evolutionary approach regarding the development of the nomadic economy. He also doubts the theory, maintained by A. Khazanov, that the nomadic economy was strongly dependent on agricultural societies. In this connection he quotes Nicola Di Cosmo,[45] according to whom the nomads were less dependent on sedentary societies. They practiced various forms of agriculture themselves or included farmers in their states.[46] T. Noonan also draws special attention to the theory of Gy. Györffy,[47] who, after studying the Magyars of Hungary, created a model of nomadic lifestyle, typical for Eastern Europe. He defined the economy of the Magyars as semi-nomadic. In winter, they settled along the major rivers and engaged in fishing. In spring, wheat was sown in suitable locations, after which the Magyars moved on towards summer pastures together with their cattle. At harvest-time they gathered the crops and returned to their winter settlements along the rivers. T. Noonan is, however, unsure as to whether the Magyar model can be used in the study of the nomadic economy in the Northern Black Sea steppes. In other words, it is unclear whether this model was transferred from there by the Magyars or was adopted by them after their settlement in the new territories.[48]

Theoretical models for the nomadic economy are not sufficient to clarify the Khazar economy, nor do they help in understanding the reasons behind the development or the decline of Khazaria. Each steppe empire combined an agricultural, stock-breeding and handicraft sector in its economy. They existed simultaneously in numerous varieties, due not only to the vast ethnic diversity of the population, but also to differences in the geographical environment, the climate, etc. To understand the Khazar economy, a differentiation of various economic zones should be made, as well as an attempt to find links between them.

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the third type the nomads conquer the agricutural society and settle on its territory. A regulated taxation of the farmers and citizens then takes place. This type of nomadic empire is not so much "nomadic" as "sedentary-agricutural", with the nomadic stock-breeders being predominant in the political sphere and in military structures.

45 Di Cosmo 1994.

46 Noonan 1995–1997, 253–255.

47 Gyorffy 1975.

48 Noonan 1995–1997, 254 and 258. According to Golden 1982, 63, this form of nomadic pastoralism is typical for the nobility of the East European/West Eurasian nomads and is reflected in the letter of the Khazar ruler Joseph; see also Mikheev 2004, 89–90.

4.2 The Beginning of the Sedentarization Process in the Khazar Lands

In M. Artamonov's view, "the most remarkable phenomenon in Khazaria's history during the eighth century was the considerable spread of a sedentary way of life and the agriculture, related to it,—not only in the old agricultural areas of the Caucasus foothills and the mountains of the Southern Crimea [...], but also in the maritime areas of the Eastern Crimea and the Taman Peninsula, and along the lower reaches of the Kuban and Don Rivers [...] Moreover, sedentary agriculture occurred deep in the steppe zone and particularly in the forest steppe it bordered, where for many centuries the only inhabitants were nomads and where nothing of the sort had existed, both before the Huns and after them".[49] This process is usually referred to as "mass sedentarization". It is assumed that prior to the eighth century, only the Scythians of the Third Scythian Kingdom settled down en masse (on the threshold between the third and the second centuries BC).[50]

Among the nomadic societies of the steppe region, mass sedentarization is indeed a rare phenomenon. The reasons for this are many, but the most important one (apart from the climatic impact)[51] probably is the fact that the nomads did not want to abandon their habitual way of life. The nomadic tribes have in a way always practiced a sedentary way of life. But the ones who settled down constituted only a small part of the population and as a rule were forced to engage in agriculture due to poverty. Such involuntary and often temporary settlement was patronized by the wealthier segments of society. The sedentary nomads, however, were 'marginal' members of society and lost important privileges and protection rights. They were therefore willing to return, when possible, to nomadism.[52] From this perspective, a mass sedentarization signified a change in the nomadic way of thinking and the destruction of their traditional value system. Such a process meant that the nomadic society itself had disintegrated.[53]

The unsuitability of the steppe territory for the development of agriculture is the reason why mass sedentarization was most often the result of a migration beyond the steppe zone. It could be gradual, stretching over a prolonged

49 Artamonov 1962, 235.

50 Khazanov 1975, 13, 248–249, and 259–261; see also Noonan 1995–1997, 294.

51 Climate as a factor in the development of the steppe economy will be discussed later on.

52 Khazanov 1975, 150–151; Khazanov 1994, 83–84 and 199.

53 Khazanov 1994, 199.

period of time, or could happen suddenly.[54] The unusual trait of Khazaria is the permanent settlement in various areas of its purely steppe territory.

The emergence of the Saltovo culture is usually ascribed to mass migration. In the early or mid-eighth century, some of the Alans moved from the North Caucasus region to the forest-steppe zone around the upper reaches of the Severski Donets. They carried with them the main traits of their culture and economy. The Alanian migration is, however, a resettlement of an agricultural population from one area to another and cannot serve as an example for the transition of nomads towards a mass sedentarization. If the Saltovo culture is to be regarded as intrinsic chiefly to the Alans, then there should be no particular difficulty in explaining the reasons for its emergence.[55] However, since it is seen as the culture of the Khazar state and belongs to both the Alans, the Bulgars and the Khazars, the Alanian migration cannot provide the necessary answer.[56]

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54 Khazanov 1994, 200–201.

55 This approach is typical of some Russian scholars, for example: Afanas'ev 1984a and 2001. The view of the Saltovo culture as purely Alanian is an example of incorectness in the ethnic interpretation of the monuments. The Bulgar culture is related to the Late Sarmatian monuments from the Northern Caspian coast region and the lower reaches of the Volga between the second and the fourth centuries (Angelova 1995, 5–8). The Bulgars can easily be differentiated from the Alans by their burial rites and their anthropological type. Naturally, in areas where the two communities lived together, mixing occurred, both of the anthropological type, and the burial rites. But up till the 1980s such an intermingling has been noted only for the period after the eighth century (Pletneva 1981a; Kondukturova 1984, 201 and 236). The Alanian burial rite (the construction of catacombs) is not part of the Sarmatian burial traditions and probably indicates the closer ties of the Alans with the traditions of the ancient local population of the Northern Caucasus (the Maeotae). This is why "the direct involvement of Alans in the ethnogenesis of the Proto-Bulgarians is questionable" (Angelova 1995, 15). This subject is discussed in more detail in chapter 1.1.

56 In 1962 M. Artamonov defined as a Saltovo culture mainly the culture of the Alans in the forest-steppe region. Despite this he distinguished its steppe, so-called Zlivka (Bulgar) type. According to him, the Saltovo culture did not belong to the Khazar Khaganate. In his view, the Khazars were the ones who destroyed it. Here, the reference is to its Alanian version, since the Bulgar one continued to exist until 965 (Artamonov 1962, 357–358). Gradually, it becomes clear that the Saltovo culture is typical for both the population in the Don area and the population in the region around the Volga and in Dagestan. Its bearers are three major ethnic groups: the Bulgars, the Khazars and the Alans. This is why initially S. Pletneva defined eight types of the Saltovo culture, which included Alania, along with Danube and Volga Bulgaria. (Pletneva 1967, 7–8). Over time, the culture of the three states was analyzed separately, and the culture of the Khazar Khaganate was considered to be the Saltovo one. (Pletneva 1999, 11–12). From this perspective, its main bearers were the Bulgars, the Khazars and the Alans, who defined the ethnic appearance

The designation of the eighth century as the lower limit of the Saltovo culture may be correct, but does not necessarily mean that the sedentarization processes which began to develop among the Bulgar and Khazar population did not start earlier. The theory, according to which during their migration northwards the Alans, while passing through the lands of the Bulgars, managed to influence them so much in the scope of a few years, that the Bulgars not only began to settle en masse, but also adopted the Alanian agricultural and stock-breeding economy and culture, seems quite incredible.[57] The evolutionary approach hinders the explanation of the development of agriculture among the Bulgar versions of the Saltovo culture. It also prevents the search for sedentary Bulgar communities prior to the second half of the seventh and the eighth century, despite the existing data on the matter.

A striking example in this regard is the description, given by I. Baranov, of the settlement of some of the Bulgars in the Crimea. Until the middle of the seventh century, their economy was nomadic and corresponded to the first phase of nomadism (camp or year-round nomadism). These Bulgars spent the winter in pastures along the northern shores of the Sea of Azov. After passing through the Taman Peninsula, they spent each spring in the Crimea, before moving on to the steppes beyond the Isthmus of Perekop. And each winter they returned to the northern shores of the Sea of Azov. The Khazar invasion closed off this Bulgar group in the Crimean Peninsula.[58] "As a consequence of

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of the other five types (which were named Upper-Don, Lower-Don, Cis-Azov, Crimean and Dagestani).

57 S. Pletneva presented the situation in a similar way in 1967 (Pletneva 1967, 185). At the same time, she stated in the same book that "it was the Bulgars, who, mixed with some Alans, were the main creators of the Saltovo-Maiaki culture" (Pletneva 1967, 188). With regard to the Alans, Mikheev's view that the economic development in the forest-steppe zone (the Alanian one) of the Saltovo culture in the Severski Donets area cannot be explained with the sedentarization processes, seems completely logical (Mikheev 2004, 89). Tortika 2006a, 120–121 expresses a similar opinion.

58 Baranov 1990, 15. Aibabin 2003, 56 is of a similar opinion. Tortika 2006a, 129 presents the sedentarization process of the Bulgars as the result of external pressure or migration, related to the Khazar invasion (in the case of the Bulgars of Asparukh), or to Khazar pressure (on the Bulgars in the Crimea or the Don Region). According to him, some sort of sedentarization is visible among the Bulgars, since from the late seventh century and until the mid–ninth century a few "traces of the transition of the nomads to a sedentary or semi-sedentary lifestyle" appeared in various places in Eastern Europe (on the steppes borders, in the forest-steppe region and the foothills). Tortika 2006a, 112–129 therefore assumes that for the Bulgars the sedentarization process played a significantly smaller role than presumed earlier. This process was discontinued around the middle of the ninth century, as the Bulgars began to pour into the nomadic groups of the Magyars and the

these events many thousand-cattle herds were concentrated on the relatively small territory of the Crimean steppe, which was unsuitable for intensive year-round exploitation. They (the Bulgars—*Author's note*) upset the ecological balance in the Taurica steppes that required annual grass cover recovery, which had been possible with the previous brief use of seasonal pastures".[59] This led to a severe herd reduction, which was the initial reason for the sedentarization of the Bulgars in the Crimea.[60] I. Baranov's theory seems entirely plausible.

The peculiar thing is that those Bulgars were the ones who brought the Saltovo culture to the Crimea. They had adopted it in an Alanian (?) environment, in the coastal area of the Sea of Azov and the Lower Don Valley.[61] Leaving aside the question of whether there were any sedentary Alans in the coastal steppes around the Sea of Azov just before the mid-seventh century,[62] it is clear that these Bulgars mastered their agricultural and artisanal abilities prior to their settlement in the Crimea. It should be noted that according to I. Baranov, between the mid-seventh century and the first half of the eighth century the agricultural economy of the Bulgars in the Crimea provided them with enough surplus for trading in the markets of Byzantine Chersonesus.[63] This could be due to a mass sedentarization, but there is no concrete data regarding the economy of the Bulgars prior to the mid-seventh century. As shall be seen below, in the early stage of the Saltovo culture in the Crimea the presence of other Bulgar groups, or of a population, related to the Bulgars, can be traced—a population whose economy cannot be solely defined as nomadic pastoralism. Of significant importance is the conclusion, also made by I. Baranov: "it can be assumed that there was no Alanian component among the bearers of the Saltovo-Maiaki culture in the Crimea".[64]

The time between the fifth and the seventh centuries is one of the most obscure periods in the history of the steppes north of the Caucasus and the

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Pechenegs. However, Tortika 2006a, 129 considers it "obvious that the sedentary nature of the population from the Middle Don Region [. . .] cannot be explained as an evolutionary process of the Bulgar nomads' sedentarization and is rather associated with the initially sedentary nature of the larger part of the Saltovo population that migrated to these parts in the mid–eighth century".

59 Baranov 1990, 15.

60 Baranov 1990, 15.

61 Baranov 1990, 15.

62 The reason behind this persistent search of an Alanian influence on the Bulgar version of the Saltovo culture is its great similarity to the Late Sarmatian culture. As was noted earlier (see note 55), it cannot unconditionally be defined as Alanian.

63 Baranov 1990, 73–79.

64 Baranov 1990, 105.

Black Sea due to the constant movement of peoples and tribes in the region.[65] For the moment it is difficult, if not impossible to indicate specific features on the basis of archaeological data, which could aid the ethnic distinction of the various communities.

It can be assumed that the constant struggle for territories and pastures forced parts of the population or even entire tribes to withdraw to the steppe borders in the forest-steppe zone, the Crimea, the North Caucasus and Dagestan. There they could not develop extensive stock-breeding and voluntarily or not, they began to settle down. Thus, in the fifth century, the Alans, pressed by the Huns and other invaders, withdrew to the Northern Caucasus, to the territory of the future Alania.[66] It is hardly a coincidence that in the *Ecclesiastical History* of Zacharias Rhetor (mid-sixth century) special attention is paid to the Bulgars and Alans who had cities.[67] The fact that they are mentioned among the peoples with a nomadic stock-breeding economy should not be seen as contradictory. Rather, it shows a version of the agricultural and stock-breeding economy that was typical for the Bulgars and Alans in the following centuries.[68]

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65 For example, after the death of Attila, some of his subject tribes, led by his son Ernakh, migrated from Central Europe towards the Northern Black Sea region. At the same time, the Saragur, Urog/Ogur and Onogur tribes appeared north of the Caucasus and the Black Sea. They came from the Volga region, pursued by the Sabirs. Not long thereafter (in the early sixth century), came the Sabirs, pursued by the Avars, and settled in Eastern Europe. The Avars themselves arrived by the mid-sixth century and conquered a large part of the tribes that inhabited the Northern Black Sea region. Following immediately after them came the Turks, who, while pursuing the Avars, managed to conquer most of the tribes that lived east of the Don and in Dagestan (for a comment on the sources and an analysis, see Artamonov 1962, 60–138). In Liapushkin's opinion, the "lull" in migrations that came in the seventh century aided the spread of agriculture in the steppe zone (Liapushkin 1958a, 145–147).

66 Kuznetsov 1962, 14. The main system of settlements, however, emerged in the late sixth and early seveth centuries (Kovalevskaia 1984, 134–135 and 144; Arzhantseva 2007a, 75–77 and 2007b, 61–62).

67 Dimitrov 1987, 33; see the text of Zacharias Rhetor in Petrov and Giuzelev 1978, 57.

68 On the basis of the quoted account of Zacharias Rhetor, Stepanov 2003c, 38 assumes that some of the Bulgars began to settle down already in the fifth century. Their economy was "semi-agricultural and semi-nomadic, which was fitting for both the phase of their development and the specific ecological conditions and climate in the lands north of the Caucasian Ridge". During this time period—"from the fourth to the sixth century, stock-breeding in its various forms prevailed among the Bulgar tribes; by the seventh century elements of a permanent sedentariness began to appear, which archeologists today most often pinpoint to the region of the Crimean Peninsula. Already then, a specific type of

The account of Zacharias Rhetor is confirmed by archaeological data from Dagestan. The region around the Terek-Sulak Interfluve was densely populated by a sedentary population which was ethnically related to the Alans, Bulgars and the Khazars already in the sixth century. This region is even regarded by M. Magomedov as a center of the Khazar tribes' settlement.[69] An essential feature of the monuments there is that it is possible to trace a continuity in the culture from the Late Sarmatian period (the second to fourth centuries) till the Khazar times inclusive (the seventh to eighth centuries), i.e. till the initial period of the Saltovo culture. A typical example in this sense is the Andrei-Aul hillfort (dated between the second and the eighth centuries), where, according to evidence, most of the inhabitants led a sedentary way of life during the entire time of its existence.[70] The Khazar economy in Dagestan was predominantly agricultural already by the seventh century. It did not differ greatly from the economy of Khazaria in the tenth century. A similar kind of economy can be seen in all the places, where Bulgar, Alanian and Khazar monuments, dating between the eighth and tenth centuries, have been found through archaeological research. This prompts M. Magomedov to assume that the emergence of the Saltovo culture in the Don area during the eighth century was the result of a migration of parts of the three ethnic groups from Dagestan, caused by the Arab invasions.[71] Although such a development is very likely, it is only one of the possibilities when considering the Saltovo monuments from the Don area.

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settlements could be found there, bearing the characteristic traits of a sedentary lifestyle" (Stepanov 2003c, 63). See also Stepanov 2002, 32–34. Golden 1980, 46–47 also draws attention to the fact that during this period, the Bulgars engaged in stock-breeding and agriculture simultaneously.

69 Magomedov 1983, 49–50.

70 Magomedov 1983, 100; also of importance is the continuity in the development of the pottery complex from the Late Sarmatian period until the Saltovo period of several hillforts in the region of the Terek-Sulak Interfluve (Magomedov 1983, 179). See also Angelova and Doncheva–Petkova 1990, 65.

71 Magomedov 1983, 193. This theory is similar to the conclusions of Pletneva 1967, 184–185, who presumes that the reason behind the Alanian migration from the North Caucasus towards the Don area was the Arab invasion. In her later works she is willing to agree with V. Mikheev, according to whom the Alans were forcibly displaced to the forest-steppe area by the Khazar authorities (Mikheev 1985, 97 and 2004, 89); A. Gadlo is of a similar opinion (Gadlo, A. *Etnicheskaia istoriia Severnogo Kavkaza x–xiii vv*. St. Petersburg, 1994; his work unfortunately remained unattainable to me). There they had the obligation of guarding the borders (Pletneva 1999, 24–25 and 42). Tortika 2006a, 131 expresses a similar point of view. Kovalevskaia 2002, 65–67 assumes that the Alanian migration happened during the second, rather than the first half of the eighth century (and more precisely between the years 754 and 763). The migration was the result of the Arab-Khazar relations and of

The nomads used the Black Sea coast mainly for winter grazing, while in summer particularly suitable were the pastures up north, situated in the southern outskirts of the forest-steppe zone. Between the fifth and the seventh centuries, the steppe and the forest-steppe zones were inhabited by a population of diverse origins. The steppe area was populated by nomads, whose monuments of the Sivashovka type could perhaps be associated with a population of Bulgar origin.[72]

While this issue does not stir controversy in science, the case is quite different with the monuments of the population in the forest-steppe zone—the Pastyrskoe-Penkovka and the Volyntsevo cultures, as well as the monuments of the Malaia Pereshchepina type.[73] The Pastyrskoe-Penkovka and the Volyntsevo cultures (traditionally seen as Slavic) contain far too much influence from the steppes. This gives M. Artamonov grounds to associate these monuments with the Bulgar tribe Kutrigurs.[74]

The Volyntsevo archaeological culture existed between the eighth and the tenth centuries. According to M. Artamonov, its bearers were the Kutrigurs who had stayed in the forest-steppe zone on the left side of the Dnieper. The Volyntsevo pottery is regarded as a continuation of the Pastyrskoe-Penkovka one. At the same time, Volyntsevo pottery patterns can also be traced in the Saltovo pottery.[75] V. Maiko believes that Volyntsevo pottery was spread from the Bititsa hillfort. According to him, it was a Khazar center in the Slavic lands that were "in one way or another related to the Proto-Bulgarian world".[76] It is hardly

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the khaganate's policy of strengthening the Kuban area (which also led to the resettlement of Bulgars in this region) after the Abbasid penetration of the Central Caucasus in the 750s. Thus, the Alanian migration towards the Severski Donets was organized by the Khazars, who also extended the territories they controlled in a north-western direction.

72 Rashev 2007a, 70–117; the monuments from the initial period of the Saltovo culture in the Crimea (the mid-seventh century to the first half of the eighth century) are also of this type. Baranov 1990, 15–103 identifies them as Bulgar. Aibabin 1985 regards some of these monuments as Khazar. The view of A. Komar and E. Kruglov, who consider all of the monuments to be Khazar, thus rejecting the Bulgar presence in the steppes of the Northern Black Sea region between the fifth and the seventh centuries, can hardly be accepted. This subject is discussed in more detail in chapter 5.3.

73 For the main views and literature on this issue, see Rashev 2007a, 119–143.

74 Artamonov 1969, 1973, 1974, and 1990. This theory is also shared by Vaklinov 1977, 31.

75 Artamonov 1969, 3 and 8; Artamonov 1990, 277; Artamonov 1974, 252–253. Pottery, similar to the Volyntsevo one, can also be found in Danube Bulgaria (Pletneva 1967, 121). Volyntsevo elements can be seen as well in the Saltovo pottery in the Crimea from the mid-ninth century, in centers like Sudak/Sugdea (Baranov and Maiko 1995, 78).

76 Maiko 1996, 138; Baranov and Maiko 1996, 80–81.

a coincidence that the settlements with Volyntsevo pottery in the Voronezh area came to be inhabited by Saltovo population as well.[77] V. Petrukhin sees the Volyntsevo pottery as Slavic with elements from the Saltovo pottery. In his view, the Volyntsevo pottery indicates the area, inhabited by the Slavic tribes, subject to Khazaria.[78]

The Pastyrskoe-Penkovka culture occupied a vast territory that extended over the forest-steppe zone from the Prut to the Severski Donets, penetrating the steppe zone up to the middle reaches of the Bug River and the Dnieper Rapids. Its various regions experienced different cultural influences: Baltic, Slavic and steppe. The economy of this culture was based on agriculture. Of particular significance is the fact that the main handicraft centers (for example the Pastyrskoe hillfort or Kantsirka, which specialized in pottery-making and metalworking) were indisputably associated with the steppe population.[79] It is also important to bear in mind that the pottery in the final stage of development of the Pastyrskoe hillfort (during the eighth century) comes close to the Saltovo forms. S. Pletneva therefore accepts the existence of another version of the Saltovo culture, which has not yet been studied.[80]

The strong presence of a steppe population in the Pastyrskoe-Penkovka culture is evidenced by monuments, found north of the Dnieper Rapids. This gives grounds for the distinction of a local, "nomadic" version of the culture, as well as the assumption that the Kutrigurs settled down in the early seventh century.[81] The relation between the Pastyrskoe-Penkovka culture and some Bulgar tribes is most clearly manifested in the appearance of its elements in

77 Vinnikov 1995, 120 and 145.

78 Petrukhin 2005, 73–74 and 2002, 43–44. O. Sukhobokov supports the theory, hardly susceptible of proof, that the Volyntsevo pottery is closely related to the Slavic tribe Severians. They are identical to the Severi, a tribe mentioned in the sources on Danube Bulgaria that had returned to the forest-steppe zone around the Bititsa hillfort. There, together with parts of the population of Great Bulgaria (the steppe influence in the culture), they withstood the Khazar invasion (Sukhobokov 2000 and 2004, 163–167).

79 Goriunov 1981, 63–82; Rashev 2007a, 139–141.

80 Pletneva 1967, 7; see also Rashev 2007a, 140–141. The Pastyrskoe hillfort was burnt down in the mid-eighth century, probably as a result of the presumed Khazar campaigns of that time (Prikhodniuk 2000, 69). It is therefore hard to accept the assumption (upheld by Romashov 2002–2003, 161, for example) that the Pastyrskoe hillfort was a center of the Khazar Khaganate, in the fashion of the Bititsa hillfort.

81 Rashev 2007a, 141; Baranov and Maiko 1995, 77; on the basis of the Pastyrskoe pottery, found in some Slavic settlements in Moldavia, Khynku and Rafailovich 1973, 165–167 assume that Bulgars settled there between the sixth and the seventh centuries. See also Flerov 1996b, 33–37.

almost all the places, where the migration of the Bulgars can be traced to after the mid-seventh century. This applies to monuments from the region of Danube Bulgaria, the Crimea, the lower reaches of the Don and the Taman Peninsula.[82] Their spread can be associated with the collapse of Great Bulgaria. This is how M. Artamonov explains the emergence of this type of monuments in Danube Bulgaria with the presence of Kutrigurs among Aspharukh's Bulgars.[83] According to V. Maiko, under the pressure of the Khazars the Kutrigurs were forced to migrate to the Danube region, Pannonia and possibly Taurica. "There they mixed with the kindred Onogur population, but managed to retain some distinct features of their pottery complex which differed from the Onogur one. This mixing led to the creation of the Saltovo-Maiaki pottery complex of the Crimean version of this culture".[84] It should be borne in mind that the latest monuments of the Penkovka culture (until the late ninth century) are situated in the area of the Saltovo culture along the upper reaches of the Severski Donets and along the Oskol River.[85]

The area of the Pastyrskoe-Penkovka culture, associated with the strong presence of a steppe population of Bulgar origin, contains most of the monuments of the Malaia Pereshchepina type. The monuments in question are nine, four of which (Malaia Pereshchepina, Makukhovka, Novye Sanzhary

82 Rashev 2007a, 142–143; Artamonov 1969, 7–8; Baranov and Maiko 1995, 76–78; Maiko 1996, 136; see also Angelova and Doncheva–Petkova 1990 and 1992.

83 Artamonov 1969, 8.

84 Maiko 1996 138. According to Tortika 2006a, 93–94, the Khazar invasion led to a "partial destruction of the former system of settlement of the Proto-Bulgarians, along with their tribal structure". Consequently, "the large Proto-Bulgarian alliances and even tribes ceased to exist. Fragments of nomadic groups of various tribal origins—Kutrigurs, Utigurs, Onogurs, etc.—sought refuge from the Khazars in the outskirts of the steppe region in the Crimea, on the left bank of the Dnieper and in the Donetsk forest-steppe zone [...] The result was a mixture of various traditions, including burial ones, and the emergence of new versions of burial rites. In each case the proportional composition of representatives of the various ethnic groups in the new clan and tribal structures was different. This determined the formation of certain cultural traditions and features of the burial ritualism of their descendants" (Tortika 2006a, 94).

85 Pletneva 1999, 46–48; see also Liubichev 1994. The issue of the so-called Sakhnovka type monuments (pottery) is closely related to this topic, and to the origins of the Volyntsevo culture. It is assumed that this culture (considered to be Slavic) emerged on the middle reaches of the Dnieper River around the middle of the seventh century and existed until the mid-eighth century. The emergence of the Sakhnovka monuments in the area of the Severski Donets, and their existence alongside the Saltovo ones give grounds to believe that parts of the "Sakhnovians" resettled there from the area along the middle reaches of the Dnieper around the second half of the eighth century (Liubichev 2002 and 2004).

and Limarovka) are concentrated north of the Dnieper Rapids, in the area where the steppe presence in the Pastyrskoe-Penkovka culture was strongest. Two of them (Voznesenka and Novogireevka) are located further south, near the Rapids, on the threshold between the Sivashovka type monuments and the Pastyrskoe-Penkovka type. One monument (Kelegei) is near the mouth of the Dnieper, surrounded by monuments of the Sivashovka type. This way seven out of the nine monuments are in the Dnieper area, among both the Sivashovka type monuments and those of the Pastyrskoe-Penkovka culture. The last two monuments are situated in the west, in the area near the South Bug (Glodosi) and the Dniester (Iasinovo), between the monuments of the Pastyrskoe-Penkovka culture and the Sivashovka type monuments.[86] According to R. Rashev, "the fact that the Pereshchepina group [of monuments] was part of the culture of the Bulgars from the Northern Black Sea region or, more precisely, of their nobility, best explains its emergence in a historical perspective. This is the ruling elite of the population that inhabited the same territories and left behind the monuments of the Sivashovka group. The disposition of some of these monuments on the territory of the Penkovka culture gives grounds to assume a direct connection between its population and Great Bulgaria".[87]

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86 Rashev 2007a, 119–136; traditionally, Soviet historiography associates this type of monument with the Khazars (see for example Aibabin 1985 and 1991). After the work of J. Werner was published in 1984 any doubts regarding the Malaia Pereshchepina type of monuments and their direct relation to the nobility of Great Bulgaria have diminished. However, the nature of some of them, whether hoards or burials (that of Kubrat in Malaia Pereshchepina and in Voznesenka, according to the carefully constructed theory of Vaklinov 1977, 35–37, of Asparukh), remains controversial. See also the first complete description of the objects from Malaia Pereshchepina: Zaleskaia, L'vova, Marshak, Sokolova, and Foniakova 2006. In their conclusion Z. L'vova and B. Marshak do not reject the possibility that Kubrat was buried in Malaia Pereshchepina, as well as the view that the objects found there represent a hoard that once belonged to the royal house of Great Bulgaria. According to them, the Khazar theory is acceptable only if the hoard landed in the hands of the Khazars after the fall of Great Bulgaria (102–117). In this connection, quite noteworthy is the somewhat inaccurate interpretation of this type of monuments that A. Komar makes in favour of the Khazar theory: Komar 1999 and 2000. For more details, see Stanilov 2003a; Rashev 2007a, 132–134. In Pletneva's view, there is no doubt that the hoard from Malaia Pereshchepina belonged to the nobility of Great Bulgaria. She believes that Voznesenka and Glodosi could have been left by the Khazars, but adds that the available information on this matter is insufficient (Pletneva 1999, 172–176). See also Tortika 2006a, 71–90.

87 Rashev 2007a, 135. The connection between the monuments of the Sivashovka type and the Pereshchepina group is also accepted by Naumenko 2004a, 64–70, and Prikhodniuk

S. Pletneva regards the hoard from Malaia Pereshchepina as evidence of the Bulgars' deep penetration into the forest-steppe zone. They participated directly in the creation of the Pastyrskoe-Penkovka culture.[88]

It can be concluded that the beginnings of the mixed agricultural and stockbreeding economy, which was typical for the Saltovo culture and which combined parts of a sedentary and a nomadic lifestyle, could be found already in Great Bulgaria. There is also a possibility that during the seventh century, a sedentary Bulgar population lived on the Taman Peninsula.[89]

The review of the above-cited monuments and archaeological cultures from the period between the fifth and the seventh centuries is instrumental for a better understanding of the Saltovo culture's emergence. The sedentarization processes in the Khazar Khaganate were not merely the result of government or foreign-political pressure. It can be assumed that they were carried out gradually over a period of several centuries by peoples of different origins and economic development. It is important to bear in mind that the population which inhabited the steppes had a nomadic economy. In the fifth century, parts of it withdrew to the areas bordering the steppe where they began to settle down. This process led to the creation of the early Bulgar monuments, associated with a sedentary lifestyle, in areas such as Dagestan and the Crimea, and on the territory of the Penkovka culture.[90] Thus, it can be said that there were sedentary Alans and Bulgars already in the fifth century.[91] At the same time, the nomads

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2002, 128–129. In Stanilov's view, the monuments of the Malaia Pereshchepina type belonged to the Bulgar elite of the Dnieper area in the period up to the first half of the eighth century (Stanilov 2003a, 64). Also noteworthy is the increasingly popular theory that the center of Great Bulgaria was located in the vicinity of the Middle Dnieper (see for example Naumenko 2004a, 69; Stanilov 2003a, 63). According to Petrukhin 2005, 73, both the monuments of the Malaia Pereshchepina type in the Middle Dnieper area and the Bititsa hillfort indicate that, from the mid-seventh century onward, this region gained a vital significance for the "nomadic empires", giving them power over the forest-steppe zone of Eastern Europe.

88 Pletneva 1997, 43–44.

89 Pletneva 1999, 138. Sedentarization processes during the late seventh century, probably related to a population of Bulgar origin, have also been noted for the Middle Volga Region (Samarskaia Luka)—see Matveeva 2003; Matveeva and Kochkina 2005, 5–12).

90 Rashev 1998.

91 Stepanov 2003c, 38 and 2002b, 27–35. The mass sedentarization of the Scythians during the Third Scythian kingdom (third century BC–third century AD) was also no sudden or quick process. The beginnings of a sedentary lifestyle can already be seen during the Second Scythian kingdon (fourth to third century BC). It is possible that the invasion of the Sarmatians accelerated the sedentarization of the Scythians (during the third century BC) (Khazanov 1975, 259).

and the population that settled down in the outskirts of the steppe region did not live in isolation. Most often these were the same tribal groups, ruled by a common aristocratic elite. They retained their mixed economy also during the time of the Khazar Khaganate. Also of significant importance is the lack of a considerable chronological distance between the sedentarization of the Alans in the central part of the North Caucasus and that of parts of the Bulgars and Khazars (and probably a group of Alans as well) in Dagestan, which can be dated to the fifth to sixth centuries. The invasions played a role in the further redistribution of pastures and inevitably led to the withdrawal from the steppe and the subsequent sedentarization of groups that had previously engaged in stock-breeding. It is possible that the Khazar invasion from the second half of the seventh century accelerated this process among most of the Bulgars and slowed it down among the Khazars themselves.

In the seventh century, Dagestan was probably the most economically developed region in light of its mixed agricultural and stock-breeding economy. According to records and archaeological data, this region contained both cities and artificial irrigation canals. The direct continuity in the development of Dagestan from the second and third centuries onwards is perhaps also of significance. During the second half of the eighth century and during the ninth and tenth centuries, two main economical regions emerged in the Khazar Khaganate—the Northwestern Caspian coast and the western lands of the khaganate (the Crimea, the Taman Peninsula and the lower reaches of the Don).

4.3 The Don Region

Though they are part of the same geographical region, the European and the Asian steppes differ significantly from one another. One of the main reasons for this is the direction, in which the major rivers flow through them. While the Asian rivers rise mainly from the mountains in the south and cross the steppe northwards towards the tundra, in Europe they run in the opposite direction, from north to south, and flow into the Black Sea or the Caspian Sea. The major rivers of the East European Plain, such as the Dnieper, the Don or the Volga, were the main links that connected the northern peoples with the southern civilizations. They also served as a geographical landmark in the vast and unknown plain expanses of the "Barbarian" world. With their help the ancient and medieval writers defined the boundaries of this world and the habitats of the various tribes and peoples. In the minds of ancient scholars, the Don and the Sea of Azov marked the boundary between Europe and Asia and between

the European and Asian Sarmatia.[92] Crossing these rivers that divided the steppe expanses was no easy task and was mostly done via suitable fords. They were, however, few in number. In the sixth century, Procopius of Caesarea describes how a deer showed the Kutrigurs and Utrigurs the way across the border, marked by the Don and the Sea of Azov. The border which until then they "had never even tried or thought of trying" to cross.[93] In the tenth century, Constantine Porphyrogenitus mentions the Don as the border of the Khazar territories, beyond which stretched the lands of the Pechenegs. This boundary was also marked by Sarkel, which was built with Byzantine help in the 830s.[94]

If the Don is to be seen as a border river for Khazaria, it should be kept in mind that all the agricultural areas of the khaganate were actually situated in more or less border territories. This is true for the settlements in the Crimea, north of the Caucasus, and in Dagestan. If Sarkel was located on the border, then so was Itil. The Volga River, on which the Khazar capital was built, was just as boundary for Khazaria, as the Don. In the eighth and ninth centuries, east of the Volga stretched the pastures of the Pechenegs, and in the tenth century, they were the Oghuz pastures. Likewise, west of the Don began the pastures of various nomadic communities—the Magyars in the ninth century and the Pechenegs in the tenth. It is unnecessary to determine with precision a clearly defined boundary that marks the limits of the Khazar territories. The Don cannot be seen as an ethnic border, since the same ethnic groups could be found on both sides of the river. Neither is it a boundary of the Saltovo culture, which also spread westwards. And it is definitely not a border with some other state, since the territories that were subject to Kievan Rus' and Danube Bulgaria were too far off. Furthermore, the Don cannot be viewed as the boundary of the Khazar sphere of political influence: it stretched across areas, located west of the river also during the tenth century.

Geographically speaking, the Don divides the European Steppe into two halves. To the east the steppe is arid. It contains the Aral-Caspian Depression, with shallow rivers and poor soil. And west of the Don the steppe is crossed by deep valleys and river ravines with forest-covered slopes. The high and open spaces above the river beds contained agricultural fields and pastures. Vast

92 See for instance Skripkin 1982, 43.

93 Petrov and Giuzelev 1978, 60; Al-Masudi notes that it was impossible for the nomads to cross rivers in the summer. This was done in winter, when the rivers were covered in ice. This was also the season when the Khazar troops had to repel nomad attacks (Minorskii 1963, 198). On the passage of water expanses by nomads in particular, see Tortika 1999.

94 Constantine Porphyrogenitus. *De Administrando Imperio*, ch. 42, in Litavrin and Novosel'tsev 1989, 171–173.

forest wildernesses covered not only areas west of the Don, but also territories along the lower reaches of the river.[95] The existence of forests, bountiful for the steppe zone, along with sufficient water (and abundance of fish) and rich soil is probably the main reason why Khazaria's entire system of settlements was concentrated west of the Don, particularly in the valleys of the Severski Donets and its tributaries. East of the river only two significant centers have been found—Sarkel and the Semikarakorsk hillfort. They were built at important commercial crossroads and mostly served the Don fords. Sarkel and the Semikarakorsk hillfort were part of farming areas with a mixed agricultural and stock-breeding economy and settlements, located on the west banks of the river. The high right bank of the Don protected the settlements from spring floods. The steppe east of Sarkel was manly used for pastures.[96]

The Lower Don area, stretching from Sarkel to the mouth of the river, was the most fertile land in Khazaria. It occupied around 50 000 square kilometers. So far, close to a hundred settlements have been found in this area, concentrated in the valleys of the many smaller and larger tributaries of the Don. The position of the settlements creates the impression that "the region as a whole was significantly populated".[97]

The settlements along the Lower Don constitute a single economic area. It was inhabited by a sedentary population that engaged in agriculture and stock-breeding. It grew different kinds of cereals, fruit, vegetables and wine grapes. It was the Saltovo population that spread winemaking in the area along the lower reaches of the Don in the eighth century.[98] The river united the settlements into one "economically rich district that was connected to the Crimean cities in the west and with Itil in the east".[99] According to S. Pletneva, Sarkel was "in the midst of one of the most fertile lands of the Don basin. This land was the most important region in Khazaria, densely populated by an agricultural population".[100]

It is clear that to view the Don as a border river for Khazaria would be inaccurate. In fact, the lower reaches of the Don mark the center of a vast economic region that extended far to the west. On one side, it encompassed the Severski

95 Golubovskii 1884, 1–2 and 13; Zakhoder 1962, 113.

96 Pletneva 1996, 144; Pletneva 1999, 100 and 113. On the Semikarakorsk hillfort, which was most probably uninhabited in the tenth century (unlike the settlements, located on the opposite bank of the river), see Flerov 2001 and 2002, 156–158.

97 Pletneva 1999, 85.

98 Pletneva 1967, 20; Pletneva 1999, 85 and 113–117; Magomedov 1983, 98.

99 Pletneva 1999, 117.

100 Pletneva 1996, 142.

Donets Valley, and on the other—the Crimea. Sarkel and the Semikarakorsk hillfort were situated at a crossroads that was important for the commercial and administrative relations of the khaganate. It can even be postulated that (especially during the first half of the tenth century) Sarkel implemented the water link between the west and the east part of Khazaria, between the Don and the Volga. The Semikarakorsk hillfort was situated 100 kilometers south of Sarkel on the Don, at the meeting point of the roads that lay north of the Caucasus and the ones, coming from the Crimea.[101] It would be much more appropriate to view the Lower Don area as a specific economic center than as the outskirts of the khaganate.[102]

West of the Don the steppe region separates from the Donets Range, a hilly range with an average altitude of around 300 meters. To the south, steppe and not particularly fertile lands stretch all the way down to the coast of the Sea of Azov. In Khazar times, they were used mainly as pastures. The northern coast of the Taganrog Bay was suitable for grazing in the spring, when stock-breeding was combined with fishing. In summer, the grass dried out and the coast took on a semi-arid appearance. The same thing occurred in the steppe along the northern coast of the Sea of Azov, and in the Crimean Peninsula.[103]

North of the Donets Range lies the Severski Donets Valley. The upper reaches of the river run through the forest-steppe region of the Saltovo culture, and its middle reaches—through the steppe region. The Donets Range naturally separates the southern arid part of the steppe from the fertile one in the north. Along the banks of the Severski Donets and its tributaries were the settlements of the Saltovo population that was numerous and of various origins. Especially densely populated was the area around the left tributaries of the Severski Donets, like the Oskol and the Aidar. Their upper reaches also reach the forest-steppe zone. Like the Don, the Severski Donets was the main road artery in this part of Khazaria.

The distance between the confluence of the Severski Donets and the Don and the farthest settlements along the upper reaches of the river is around

101 Pletneva 1967, 47; Pletneva 1999, 113; Pletneva 1996, 146–148; see also Flerov 2001 and 2006.

102 S. Pletneva sees Sarkel as the center of a vast agricultural area in the vicinity of the Tsimliansk reservoir (Pletneva 1967, 109 and 1996, 142). In her view, it became a frontier fortress after the invasion of the Pechenegs, who plundered the settlements, situated along the right bank of the Don. This is why the Byzantine emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus regarded Sarkel as a border Khazar settlement. He, however, described Sarkel as such in the middle of the tenth century and not at the time of its erection in the 830s (Pletneva 1999, 89–100).

103 Pletneva 1999, 132; Baranov 1990, 7.

1000 kilometers. A number of fortresses (hillforts) were built along the middle and upper reaches of the Severski Donets. They were situated after the plunge of the Donets Range and surrounded in a semicircle the approach routes to the khaganate both from the southwest and the northwest. In the Kharkov area, the line of fortresses curves to the northeast, before merging with the Don at the Maiaki hillfort, 700 kilometers north of Sarkel. Therefore, it would hardly be appropriate to define this vast and comparatively densely populated area, stretching over 200 000 kilometers, as a border.

V. Mikheev regards the Don Region and the Severski Donets Valley as one economic region.[104] On the threshold between the eighth and the ninth centuries, a complex economy emerged there. "Agriculture, handicrafts and commerce supplemented the extensive forms of pastoralism that the richest groups of the population engaged in [...] A regular and sustained exchange between the city and the village was carried out, the goods being specially produced for the market".[105] The Don and the Severski Donets region contains two of the studied Saltovo culture versions, which is the reason why this region is rarely regarded as a whole. They have different ethnic features: the forest-steppe zone was dominated by an Alanian population and the steppe one—by Bulgars. The distinguishing features of these two versions are, however, not significant and are probably the result of the geographic characteristics of the various regions.[106]

4.4 Settlements and Fortresses

The forest-steppe settlements and fortresses were closely related to the nearby trade route. They also had an undeniable defensive significance as shelters for the local population and the tradesmen in these lands. Some fortresses, however, were too small to hold the population of the nearby settlements. The line of five fortresses, situated on the right bank of the Severski Donets in the steppe zone probably played a defensive role as well. Two of them,

104 Mikheev 1985, 51–52.

105 Mikheev 1985, 97–98.

106 In Tortika's view, the population of Northwestern Khazaria was "in the same historical and geographic context with the Khazar lands in the Eastern Cis-Azov Region and the lower reaches of the Don". This unity was also characterized by the presence of a natural water way that connected, via the Don and the Severski Donets, the population of the forest-steppe zone with the basins of the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea (Tortika 2006a, 230–231).

Maiaki and Sidorovo, had sizeable walled areas (circa 18 hectares each).[107] The Sudak/Sugdea fortification in the Crimea is of similar size (20 hectares). I. Baranov regards the fortresses with an area of 20 hectares or more as centers that enabled the concentration of large amounts of troops at wartime.[108] Both Sudak and Maiaki were important trade and craft centers.[109]

It is interesting to note that a significant stretch of the river (around 150 kilometers) lacked any fortresses whatsoever. The Donets Range is situated south of this area and the first fortresses appear only after the hills begin to slope down. The Range probably served as a natural fortification that separated the south steppe from the Severski Donets Valley. K. Krasil'nikov also studied this area. Around 300 settlements (ranging in size from 2 to 16 hectares) have been found on a territory of 40 000 square kilometers, not one of which was fortified.[110] They are situated in the valley around the middle reaches of the Severski Donets and its left tributaries. The settlements begin at the mouth of the Kamenka River in the west and reach the Derkula River in the east, they encompass the upper reaches of the Aidar, the Krasna and the Borova rivers in the north and in the south they border the Donets Range.[111]

This region was relatively densely populated.[112] The settlements along the middle reaches of the rivers engaged in both agriculture and stock-breeding. The lands around the upper river reaches were mainly used for grazing and were populated as well.[113] Following the evolutionary theory, K. Krasil'nikov presumes that the settlements where stock-breeding played a dominant role

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107 Mikheev 1985, 12 and 19, see also Kravchenko 2004.

108 Baranov 1990, 57 and 67.

109 Pletneva 1999, 70 and 159; a pagan shrine has been found inside the fortified walls of Sudak; it was related to the Bulgar population of the city and existed between the eighth and the tenth centuries (Baranov 1991; Baranov and Maiko 1996 and 2001). Kravchenko 2004, 268 also views Maiaki and Sidorovo as cultural and ideological centers, related to the spread of Islam and Christianity.

110 Pletneva 1999, 73; Krasil'nikov 1981, 110–119. It is important to note the concentration of unfortified settlements in the inner parts of Dobrudzha during the pagan period of Danube Bulgaria. In this area, fortresses began to appear at the end of the ninth and the begininng of the tenth century (Atanasov 2001, 188). See also Rashev 2008.

111 Krasil'nikov 1981, 110 with n. 1; quite a few unfortified settlements outside some fortresses can also be found along the upper reaches of the Severski Donets (see Liubichev 2004, 277).

112 As a comparison, more than 250 settlements, spread over on ca. 20 000 square kilometers, have been found on the territory of Dobrudzha in Northeastern Bulgaria, which was one of the most densely populated areas of the First Bulgarian Empire. It is assumed that these parameters correspond approximately to a population of 100 000 people. (Atanasov 2001, 195).

113 Krasil'nikov 1981, 122–123.

were older that the rest, although he believes that the population of the agricultural settlements used the pastures along the upper reaches of the rivers.[114] According to S. Pletneva, there is no evidence in support of the earlier emergence of the so-called *stoibishcha*, herding camps. She assumes that they were the summer pastures of a sedentary population that not only engaged in agriculture and handicrafts, but also in transhumance.[115]

The area around the Oskol (a left tributary of the Severski Donets) is also dominated by unfortified settlements. The fortified ones (four in number) are located along the upper and lower reaches of the river, where the main trade route passed. The fortifications along the upper reaches of the Oskol connected the fortresses, situated on the upper reaches of the Severski Donets (in the west), with the ones, located along the Tikhaia Sosna River (in the east).[116] No trade routes passed along the Oskol, or along any of the other left tributaries of the Severski Donets. The road went around the area that was occupied by unfortified settlements, without crossing it. The settlements along the Oskol were characterized by the development of metallurgy, based on local resources.[117]

The settlements and fortresses in the forest-steppe region occupy a territory of around 100 000 square kilometers, on which more than 300 monuments have been found. A characteristic feature of this area is the large number of fortified settlements, built close to one another in the valleys around the upper reaches of the Severski Donets (on average, at every 20 kilometers) and of the Tikhaia Sosna (at every 15 kilometers). The short distances between them (equivalent to a day's march) and their arrangement in a straight line gives grounds to assume that they served as road stations.[118] In G. Afanas'ev's view, the fortresses constituted a border fortification line and were also of importance for trade.[119] It is, however, hardly possible to understand in full the purposes of the hillforts by examining them in isolation from the surrounding settlements. The

114 Krasil'nikov 1981, 123–125.

115 Pletneva 1999, 74–75.

116 Vinnikov and Pletneva 1998, 40.

117 Vinnikov and Pletneva 1998, 40. There are also other centers of metal production, related to the Bulgar population of the steppe zone (see Koloda 2007).

118 Pletneva 1999, 61–63. This assumption is also backed by the comparison with the main route in Danube Bulgaria that led from the Danube to the Balkan Mountain Range (Stara Planina) via Pliska. The fortresses there are also situated on an average distance of 20 kilometers apart. The road went through the center of the state and was not a border fortification line (Rashev 1982, 103).

119 Afanas'ev 1993, 122 and 148–150; Mikheev 2004, 90–91 also sees the fortresses as a border line. They "isolated" (?) the khaganate's subjects from the Slavic population. According to

fortified settlements in the Severski Donets Valley were surrounded by unfortified ones that sometimes were much larger than them.[120] Without denying that the fortresses served as shelters in case of military threats, S. Pletneva believes that they were some sort of castles of the Saltovo nobility. The lack of a clearly defined cultural layer in the fortified territories gives additional grounds to associate the hillforts with the nobility, which is believed to have engaged in nomadism along with its herds in summer and inhabited the fortresses only during wintertime.[121] An interesting addition is the fact that the fortresses along the Tikhaia Sosna River are small in size and are built in the center of already existing large settlements. They are not surrounded by several settlements, like the fortresses in the Severski Donets area.[122] According to S. Pletneva, the hillforts along the Tikhaia Sosna combine the functions of fortresses, castles and stops for trade caravans, similar to the hillforts along the Severski Donets.[123]

In the northwest and the northeast, the forest-steppe settlements of the Saltovo culture bordered with several Slavic hillforts that were subjected to the Khazar Khaganate. The fortresses were situated along the trade route that

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Romashov 2002–2003, 148, these fortresses traced the borders of the Khazar Khaganate, beyond which stretched the lands of the Slavic "tributaries" of the Khazars.

120 One example is the hillfort near Sukhaia Gomol'sha, which occupies 2 hectares, while the settlement next to it covers an area of 30 hectares; ten large settlements have been found near the hillfort of Mokhnach; two settlements have been found next to the hillfort near Maiaki, one of them covering 30 hectares and the other—9 hectares; and lastly, the area with traces of inhabitation in the vicinity of the Sidorovo hillfort is around 100 hectares (Mikheev 1985, 7–8, 12–13, and 19; Pletneva 1967, 30; Kravchenko 2004, 249 and 265–266).

121 Pletneva 1999, 27 and 33 (the assumption that the Saltovo nobility engaged in seasonal pastoral nomadism is based on the account of the Khazar ruler Joseph); Pletneva 1989, 24–25.

122 See Pletneva 1999, 61–63; Vinnikov and Pletneva 1998, 38–40.

123 Pletneva 1999, 63; Since the necropoles in the forest-steppe zone usually contain weapons, it is assumed that a militarized population was concentrated in that area (Pletneva 1999, 24–25 and 42; Pletneva 1989, 268 and 278. See also Tortika 2006a, 133). These necropoles mostly contain Alanian burials. The Bulgar population that mainly inhabited the area south of the Alans did not usually conduct burials with weapons (those burials were not inherent to Danube Bulgaria either). It is therefore impossible to determine the nature of its military services. It is hardly possible to accept the view of Tortika 2006a, 128–129, according to whom the lack of inventory and weapons in the Bulgar burials in the steppe zone indicates the greater poverty of the local population in comparison to that of the forest-steppe zone. The appearance of a varied inventory and weapons in some Bulgar necropoles is rather an exception (both in Khazaria and in Danube and Volga Bulgaria). See Rashev 2003a.

led northwest towards Kiev and Chernigov and north towards the Oka River. The Slavic settlements were closely related to the Khazar economy. This relation has been studied in greater detail in the case of the Borshevo culture along the middle and upper reaches of the Don.[124] The settlements in the immediate vicinity of the Saltovo ones are known to have specialized in hunting animals with valuable pelts that fed the demands of both the Saltovians in the south and international trade.[125] Evidence shows that in many of the settlements Slavs and Saltovians lived side by side. It is hardly a coincidence that the places where Volyntsevo pottery has been found were colonized by Saltovians in the ninth and tenth centuries.[126]

Slavic settlements, situated west of the Saltovo ones and related to the Severians tribe, have similar features. It can be assumed that a large part of the Slavic population, whose settlements were in the immediate vicinity of the Saltovo ones, remained in Khazaria even after the ninth century, when Oleg annexed the Severians to Kievan Rus'. It is not quite clear how far west the scope of the direct Khazar influence reached. The Bititsa hillfort on the Psel River, for example, also demonstrates both Saltovo and Volyntsevo features.[127]

It can be said with certainty that the Slavic population in the area around the upper reaches of the Severski Donets remained in Khazaria. Its economy was linked to the Khazar Don Region, which was mostly populated by Bulgars and Alans. The theory of V. Koloda is therefore quite credible: in his opinion, even if an altercation did exist between the eastern tribes of the Severian union and the Khazar Khaganate, it eventually turned "into a mutual penetration of cultures and ethnic groups and in some monuments it even led to the emergence of a population, which was quite syncretic in its origins and culture".[128]

The Slavic settlements increased the Khazar road system that connected the Arabic world and Byzantium with Kievan Rus' and Scandinavia. The line of fortresses, built along the length of this system, should not be regarded as

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124 Moskalenko 1981, 131–141; Vinnikov 1995, 122–145.

125 Vinnikov 1995, 45 and 69.

126 Vinnikov 1995, 81, 100–106, 122, and 140–145.

127 Sukhobokov, Voznesenskaia, and Priimak 1989, 104; Moskalenko 1981, 140. According to Petrukhin 1995b, 120–121, Oleg conquered only part of the tribal communities of the Severians and the Radimichi. The scholar assumes that the Pereiaslavl' area (inhabited by the Volyntsevo population) was annexed to Kievan Rus' only at the end of the tenth century.

128 Koloda 2001; see also Tortika 2002; Tortika 2006a, 365–366 and 373–376. L. Gumilev presumes that in the mid-tenth century (the 940s), some Slavic tribes, related to the communities of the Severians and the Radimichi, were conquered once again by the khaganate (Gumilev 1997, 223, 226, 235–236, and 254–255).

a border-line, but rather as a line of administrative and trade centers (road stations). The Saltovo and Slavic population did not have any serious disputes and thrived on a constant exchange and interaction.[129] According to A. Tortika, the subjugated Slavic population lived "in relatively peaceful conditions" in the Khazar Khaganate. With the arrival of the Magyars, and the Pechenegs later on, Northwestern Khazaria played the role of a "shelter" against their attacks.[130]

It is only natural to assume that not all of the fortified settlements had equal status and functions. This is evidenced not only by the differences in their sizes (ranging from 0.5 to 18 hectares), but also by the materials they were built from. For example, several fortresses have brick walls, which indicates that the whole area was part of the Khazar administrative system. According to Eastern sources (e.g. Al-Istakhri), the use of this building material was a special privilege of the khagan.[131] Rectangular in plan brick fortifications existed in Dagestan already from the third and fourth centuries onwards. They are also typical of the early Khazar period (the seventh to the eighth century).[132] In the Don Region, the walls of Sarkel were made of brick—and this city was undoubtedly erected by order of the Khazar khagan.[133] The Semikarakorsk hillfort also had brick walls and was square in shape.[134]

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129 Quite important, though still quite obscure is the issue of the Uliches and Tiverians who are mentioned as Slavic tribes in the Russian chronicles. According to the *Novgorod First Chronicle* (from the fifteenth century), the Uliches lived downstream of the Dnieper, south of the Polianians. Together with the Tiverans they later inhabited the territory between the Bug and the Dniester, in the south up to the Danube. In Nasonov's opinion, their migration to these parts occurred during the ninth century at the latest, when the Magyars came to the steppes, followed later on by the Pechenegs (Nasonov 1951, 41–42). On the other hand, according to Mikhailov 1990, 109, the pressure of the Rus' state caused the Tiverians to move out first, followed by the Uliches in the mid-tenth century. The *Nikon Chronicle* (from the sixteenth century) states that the Uliches' migration occurred during the reign of the Rus' Prince Igor and was the result of the war, waged against them by his warlord Sveneld (Polnoe sobranie russkih letopisei IX–X. *Nikonovskaia letopis*, 1965, 26). Dimitrov 1989, 13–14 concludes that both the Uliches and the Tiverians were part of the Bulgar population, located north of the Danube. Bubenok 1997, 91 in his turn believes that neither the Tiverians nor the Uliches were Slavs, but descendants of the local Sarmatian population. And in Gumilev's opinion, during the 940s the Uliches were allies of the Khazars (Gumilev 1997, 221).

130 Tortika 2006a, 90.

131 Pletneva 1999, 86; Dunlop 1967, 92; Golden 1980, 102.

132 Pletneva 1999, 53–54.

133 This is explicitly stated by Constantine Porphyrogenitus (*De Administrando Imperio*, ch. 42, in Litavrin and Novosel'tsev 1989, 171–173). Pletneva 1999, 86.

134 See for instance Flerov 2001, 58–68.

Of special interest is the line of four brick fortresses of a square shape, situated along the Tikhaia Sosna River (on the northeastern border of the Saltovo territory, where the Maiaki hillfort is located as well). These fortresses were built on the road that connected the upper reaches of the Severski Donets with the upper reaches of the Don. It ran north of the densely populated valley along the middle reaches of the Severski Donets and its left tributaries. The fortresses functioned both as Khazar administrative centers and as a sort of caravanserais, similar to those in Sarkel.[135]

The existence of Khazar administrative centers in the remote northern areas is also evidenced by the fortresses, built from large hewn stone blocks (unlike most of the stone fortresses in the forest-steppe zone that had less massive walls, built from rubble stone). Three such fortifications are known in the Don area: the Maiaki and Verkhnii Ol'shanksk hillforts on the Tikhaia Sosna and the Right-bank Tsimliansk hillfort, located on the Don opposite of Sarkel.[136]

The enormous resources and energy that went into the erection of the stone and brick fortresses not only indicate the great significance of the Don Region for the khaganate, but also that it was an important part of its territory.[137] Especially noteworthy is the Tikhaia Sosna area where six brick and stone fortresses were built. Several Saltovo fortresses along the upper reaches of the Severski Donets can also be named here, like the Verkhnii Saltov and the

135 Vinnikov and Pletneva 1998, 36–40. Flerov 2002, 155 and 2007, 57 rejects the existence of caravanserais in Sarkel.

136 Vinnikov and Pletneva 1998, 40; Pletneva 1999, 54 and 1967, 35. In 1991, one more fort was found (the Kamyshin one), at a distance of 1 km from the Tsimliansk one. It is presumed to have been built from large hewn stone blocks (Flerov 2002, 160–161). The *auls* of Danube Bulgaria, regarded as fortified castles, are built in the same manner (Vaklinov 1977, 96). So far, as *auls* are regarded Pliska, Preslav, the fortress near the village of Khan Krum, on the Păcuiul lui Soare Island, Drustur, near Slon in the Carpathian Mountains and probably also the fortresses near Oriakhovo and Vidin (Rashev 1982, 126; see also Rashev2008, 45). They were "garnison headquarters or residences of the khan or some local military ruler [. . .] they not only had a military strategic purpose, but also a representative function; and their construction bears the traits of the official monumental construction in Danube Bulgaria" (Dimitrov 1987, 224).

137 Afanas'ev 1993, 147. On this issue, see about the Semikarakorsk hillfort Flerov 2006, 66. According to Pletneva 1967, 40, the erection of the Tsimliansk hillfort required even greater efforts, since there were no stones in the area. The stone blocks were transported over a distance of at least 100 km from quarries, located north along the Don. This assumption is however rejected by Flerov 1991, 164.

Kabanovo (Kaganovo) hillforts. The Khumar hillfort on the upper reaches of the Kuban River served a similar purpose.[138]

4.5 The Khazar "Climates"

In his letter to Hasdai ibn Shaprut, the Khazar ruler Joseph names the main centers of the western Khazar lands.[139] It is hardly a coincidence that out of the twelve mentioned settlements, eleven (excluding only Sarkel) are located on the Crimean and the Taman Peninsulas. Among them only one (Samkerts) is situated on the Taman Peninsula: the other ten are in the Crimea. Thus this peninsula is presented by Joseph as one of the most important regions of the khaganate. According to Eastern sources, a similar concentration of Khazar administrative centers could also be found in Dagestan. Ibn Khordadbeh and the author of *Hudud al-'Alam* mention nine cities in Dagestan (from a total of ten, together with Itil).[140] These accounts, together with the finds from the hillfort excavations prompt M. Magomedov to define the culture of the Khazar part of Dagestan as a "culture of cities".[141]

The larger part of the Crimea territory is an extension of the steppe zone. The southern part of the peninsula is dominated by a mountain range which reaches a height of 1500 meters. The coast, stretching south of the mountains, is a narrow fertile plain with a typical Mediterranean climate, suitable for

138 Afanas'ev 1993, 134 and 138; Pletneva 1967, 32 and 2002, 118–119; Svistun 2007; Bidzhiev 1984 and 1989, 35–40. The Khumar hillfort is one of the largest fortresses of the Saltovo culture. It exceeds in size (reaching 40 hectares) all other fortifications in the region of the Lower Don and the Severski Donets (Flerov 2007, 66–67). A quick comparison: the inner city of Pliska covered 48 hectares, and together with the outer one it reached 2300 hectares (Rashev 2008, 129). The size of Sarkel was 2.08 hectares, and the Semikarakorsk hillfort stretched over 4.3 hectares (Flerov 2002, 156). Aksenov 2006a, 76 regards the Verkhnii Saltov hillfort as an administrative center in the northern lands of the Khazar Khaganate. The settlement was a trade and craft center. A numerous and multiethnic military contingent (made up of Alans, Bulgars, Finno-Ugrians and Slavs) secured the trade routes, as well as the subordination of the neighbouring tribes. The complex near Verkhnii Saltov has yet to be fully examined and the fort itself is small in size (Flerov 2007, 60–62).

139 Baranov 1990, 54.

140 Pletneva 1976, 30.

141 Magomedov 1983, 46. Pletneva 1999, 180 assumes that the hillforts that exceeded 30 hectares in size could be regarded as remains of cities (see also Pletneva 2002). Five such hillforts can be found in Dagestan: Targu (30 hectares), Urtseki (35 hectares), Tarki (60 hectares), Andrei-Aul (68 hectares) and Verkhnii Chiriurt (120 hectares) (Magomedov 1983, 45). See as well the opinion of Flerov 2007, 67–73. Also, Romashov 2004, 185–217.

growing olives and vines.[142] The southern slopes of the mountains are incised by deep and fertile river valleys. The density of settlements was biggest in the areas that had suitable conditions for the cultivation of various cereals and vines. These included the coastal area of the plain and the mountain slopes. The steppe zone is arid and infertile. It was used as a pasture land. The areas most densely populated with Saltovo population included the river valleys in the foothill regions of the central and eastern part of the Crimea, the Kerch Peninsula, as well as parts of the northwestern and southwestern coastal areas.[143] The largest fortified settlement in the Khazar Khaganate (with the exception of Dagestan), Mangup, was also situated in the Crimea.[144] Its walls were made of large hewn stone blocks, similar to the Maiaki and Tsimliansk hillforts. According to I. Baranov, the large fortresses in the Crimea like Mangup, Sugdea, Bosporus, etc. surrounded wastelands. Thus, significant troops could be concentrated in them.[145]

There is a visible correlation between the economic interests of the mountain population and those of the peoples of the lowlands, irrespective of whether the mountain-dwellers were part of the Khazar Khaganate or not. The high mountain pastures were important to the population that engaged in stock-breeding and whose settlements were situated in the lowlands. In a similar fashion, the mountain-dwellers needed the pastures in the lowlands. This dependence is most clearly visible in Dagestan.[146]

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142 Obolenski 2001, 42–43.

143 Baranov 1990, 7 and 9; see also Maiko 2007.

144 Baranov 1990, 58; its size is 90 hectares. The largest Khazar fortification in Dagestan is the Verkhnii Chiriurt hillfort (most probably, the hillfort known as Balanjar in the sources) that stretched over 120 hectares. The size of the other hillforts was significantly smaller than 90 hectares (Magomedov 1983, 45).

145 Baranov 1990, 66–67. Marvakov 2007, 210 notes "a similarity in the organization of territories of the First Bulgarian Empire and Crimean Khazaria. Such fortresses can be found throughout the whole territory of the Khazar Khaganate [...] Their main purpose was identical: to keep under control large territories, the defense of which was organized by the state".

146 According to Magomedov 1983, 100–101, "the dominant role of the Khazar Khaganate in the vast seaside and foothill areas of the Pre-Caucasus Region ensured great opportunities for the most rational form of stock–breeding—the pastoral one. In winter the livestock were kept in the large pasturelands of the Cis-Caspian Lowland, which are historically evolved winter pastures even today, and in summer the herds were led to the Alpine pastures in the Caucasus Mountains, the rulers of which were subjugated to the Khazars one way or another. Another possibility is the existence of an economic cooperation between them".

The Terek-Sulak Interfluve is a large steppe plain that to the west borders a foothill region (20 to 50 km wide), cut by the vast valleys of the rivers Terek, Aksai, Yarik-Su, Aktash and Sulak. South of the Sulak the lowland narrows and stretches in the form of a coastline (2 to 30 km wide) over a distance of 160 kilometers to Derbent. The river valleys in the foothill region were the most densely populated.[147] They offered the most fertile lands that were suitable for the cultivation of various cereals, vegetables and vines. Unlike the Don Region, the water resources in Dagestan were not sufficient, which led to the construction of irrigation canals. Towards the Caspian coast the steppe soil became more and more barren. Therefore, the Cis-Caspian Lowland near the coast was mainly used for grazing.[148]

This is the time to draw attention to the bankruptcy of L. Gumilev's theory, according to which the most fertile Khazar lands were located in the Caspian coastal area. And what is more, they were supposedly in the immediate vicinity of the sea, since they had been flooded by its waters in the tenth century. This unproven fact serves as the basis for L. Gumilev's theory on the crisis of the Khazar state in the tenth century.[149] The steppe around Itil or near the

147 Magomedov 1983, 26–35 and 178.

148 Magomedov 1983, 97; Noonan 1995–1997, 267.

149 Gumilev 2003, 114 and 143; Gumilev 1997, 54, 65, and 212. L. Gumilev contradicts himself by describing the Northwestern Caspian coast, the so-called Black Lands (located north of the Terek mouth): "This is the bottom of the Caspian Sea, dried out in prehistoric times. From the west it is limited by the branches of the Kalmyk Steppe, and to the east it gradually turns into the Caspian Sea. It is even hard to determine a coastline, since it depends on the direction of the wind. The western wind drives away the water, baring the sea bottom, while the eastern one brings with it great quantities of water, flooding the coastal area, sometimes up to 10 km inland. This sombre plain received its name "Black Lands" because it hardly snows there in winter, and what little snow falls, mixes with the fine dust and sand. But it is precisely in wintertime that the sheep from Dagestan and Kalmykia are brought there to graze [...] The summer sun burns away the grass that has remained uneaten by the sheep and the area turns into a desert [...] Even if the Khazars ruled over the plains of the Northwestern Cis-Caspian coast, they lived in other places that were more pleasing and comfortable" (Gumilev 2003, 72–73); "In the second century, the Khazars inhabited the lower reaches of the Terek and the Sulak. They settled along the Volga later on, and not through the dry steppes, but along the Caspian coast [...] In the times when the steppe watershed areas were consecutively ruled by the Sarmatians (during the third century BC), the Huns (the fourth century), the Bulgars (the fifth century), the Avars (the sixth century), the Magyars and the Pechenegs, the Khazars lived peacefully in the dense coastal thickets that remained out of reach for the nomads, with whom they were constant enemies" (Gumilev 1997, 55); "For a long time the Khazars dominated the plains of Dagestan, the Terek-Sulak Interfluve [...] the Khazars lived on

mouth of the Volga was also dry and barren. Not incidentally, both the Eastern writers and the Khazar ruler Joseph note that the fields and vineyards of the Itil citizens were situated far from the city.[150] The sources are most probably correct. In their descriptions of Samadar, the same writers talk about vineyards and gardens that were located nearby.[151] This information also corresponds to the archaeological data on the areas surrounding the large settlements in Dagestan.[152] When Al-Istakhri states that the Khazar land (as interpreted by D. Dunlop and P. Golden; according to B. Zakhoder's—the Khazars) did not produce anything that could be exported to other lands (again according to D. Dunlop and P. Golden; according to B. Zakhoder—neither produced nor exported anything), except isinglass,[153] he obviously means the surroundings of Itil.

Al-Istakhri's text on Eastern Europe describes various regions and peoples, along with the goods they produced, from the viewpoint of Muslim trade. The main goods in Itil that were of interest for the Eastern merchants were imported and were not processed in the city. However, they most often came from regions that were subjugated to Khazaria! Al-Istakhri's account therefore cannot be used as proof of Khazaria's lack of a well-developed production and does not contradict the established view of Itil's surroundings, which is based on both written and archaeological evidence.

Agriculture was the basis of the Khazar economy in the Crimea, where the level of sedentariness was higher in comparison to the Don Region. Agriculture, along with stock-breeding, provided a surplus that was intended for the market. Pottery-making and metalworking were the most well-developed handicrafts. The Saltovo craftsmen were in demand not only in the Crimea, but also in Sarkel and the Don Region.[154] Various goods were sent northwards, towards

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the northern bank of the Terek and along the Caspian coast between the mouths of the Terek and the Sulak [. . .] the foothill and steppe regions of Dagestan were not inhabited by Khazars" (Gumilev 1997, 65).

150 Artamonov 1962, 397; Noonan 1995–1997, 257–259; Dunlop 1967, 224–225; Golden 1980, 102–104; Novosel'tsev 1990, 113.

151 Artamonov 1962, 398; Noonan 1995–1997, 257; Dunlop 1967, 227–228; Golden 1980, 103. Recent archaeological excavations in the Astrakhan' area allow for the assumption that a large Saltovo craft center from the period between the ninth and the tenth centuries has been found. Even though it may not be Itil, it is still a settlement of significant size near the Volga mouth that was inhabited by an agricultural and artisan population. (Zilivinskaia and Vasil'ev 2006; Zilivinskaia, Vasil'ev, and Grechkina 2006; Zilivinskaia 2007).

152 Magomedov 1983, 97.

153 Dunlop 1967, 96; Golden 1980, 103; Zakhoder 1962, 141.

154 Baranov 1990, 78–81; see also Aibabin 2003, 55–64; Makarova 2003.

the Saltovo settlements along the Don and the Severski Donets. It can plausibly be argued that Khazaria had a well-developed domestic trade, driven by the produce of its own population.[155]

Pottery and metallurgy centers with a production intended for the market cropped up in almost every area of the Don Region. This is true for both the more remote settlements like the Maiaki hillfort (one of the largest pottery centers was located there)[156] or the Oskol Valley area (known for its metallurgical production), and the Sarkel area, located approximately in the center of the western Khazar lands. Not all products were transported over long distances. The pottery was rarely spread beyond a radius of 100–150 kilometers. For example, kitchen pottery, produced in the Lower Don area or the along the middle reaches of the Severski Donets, was supplied to settlements along the upper reaches of the river, as well as the upper reaches of the Oskol.[157] Long-distance trade from those days is mostly evidenced by amphora finds. The centers that specialized in the production of amphorae in the Crimea and on the Taman Peninsula traded with the whole Don Region. The spread of the amphorae indicates the existence of dynamic ties between the bearers of various versions of the Saltovo culture in the western part of Khazaria. Amphorae, produced in the Crimea, can also be found in the Borshevo settlements along the upper reaches of the Don.[158]

The discussion of the importance of international trade for Khazaria should not be focused only on the custom duties that fed the Khazar treasury or the security that the khaganate provided for the tradesmen and goods that passed through it. Khazaria's well-developed inner connections, economy and trade made it a large and significant market for foreign merchants. Coin finds are not always a reliable indicator for the state of the economy. Coins were relatively sparse in the khaganate and did not have such a paramount importance for

155 Pletneva 1967, 116 and 1999, 22. So far, 82 settlements have been found on the Taman Peninsula, encompassing its entire territory. The economy of the local population (mainly of Bulgar origins) was mixed, consisting of stock-breeding and agriculture. It is also safe to assume the existence of "vibrant and stable domestic economic ties, as well as ties with the outer world" (Paromov 2003, 161).

156 Vinnikov and Pletneva 1998, 157.

157 Pletneva 1967, 107–108; Baranov 1990, 103. See also Flerov 1981.

158 Pletneva 1967, 129–131; Pletneva 1989, 144; Pletneva 1999, 22; Mikheev 1985, 98; Noonan 1995–1997, 175–176; Vinnikov 1995, 69 and 135. See also Tortika 2006a, 480–483; according to Tortika, the peoples, inhabiting the Don Region, had commercial ties mainly with the Crimea and the Taman Peninsula, and the roads along the Don and the Severski Donets mostly had a regional (i.e. for the Khazar Khaganate) commercial importance and were not associated with Eastern trade (Tortika 2006a, 479, 485–486 and 494–495).

the Khazar economy, as they did for the economy of Kievan Rus', for example. Khazaria mainly imported jewelry, beads and other, often luxury goods. Such items were also produced in the khaganate itself. The Khazar production met not only the domestic (Saltovo) needs. Khazar goods have been found in several Slavic and Finno-Ugrian settlements in the forest-steppe and forest zones.[159]

S. Pletneva believes that the tenth century saw the emergence of an independent Khazar artistic style within the applied arts. It includes several artifacts from the Sarkel hoard from the mid-tenth century (the dirhams in it date from the period 907–954 AD) that were produced in the court workshops of Itil. The belt set from the hoard is typical precisely for the tenth century. Most probably produced in Itil, such belt sets often reached Volga Bulgaria, the Crimea and Kievan Rus'. "All wealthy warriors of Southeast Europe wore such belts, thus emphasizing the unity of style that had spread at that time". The hoard also manifests the close ties between Sarkel and Itil during the stated period.[160]

The Lower Don area and the Crimean Peninsula can be regarded as the most well-developed and rich lands of the western part of Khazaria during the ninth and the tenth centuries. Constantine Porphyrogenitus was most probably referring to them when he wrote about the nine climates (regions) of Khazaria, adjacent to Alania. According to the Byzantine emperor, "from these nine climates come all the livelihood and plenty of Khazaria".[161]

In M. Artamonov's view, the "climates" were located in the Crimea or the Caucasus and were inhabited by an agricultural population that supplied the still nomadic Khazars with all the necessary products.[162] A. Novosel'tsev interprets the meaning of the Byzantine emperor's account in another way, assuming that he was referring to the regions of Western Khazaria, described in Joseph's letter. This way, he identifies the peoples, subject to the khagan, with the climates that were the administrative-territorial units of the Khazar state, ruled by tuduns.[163] In line with Joseph's account, A. Novosel'tsev defines as climates the lands of the Burtas, the Volga Bulgars, the Mari, some of the Slavs and "some other territories, apparently in the Don Region".[164] He assumes that

159 Noonan 1995–1997, 283–284. According to Noonan 1995–1997, 284, "Saltovo craftsmen produced for the domestic market within Khazaria and for the market to the north. In short, Khazaria [...] was a major craft producer in its own right". See also Kovalevskaia 2001 and 2002.

160 Pletneva 1996, 115 and 155–156; Makarova and Pletneva 1983.

161 Constantine Porphyrogenitus. *De Administrando Imperio*, ch. 10, in Litavrin and Novosel'tsev 1989, 53.

162 Artamonov 1962, 363.

163 Novosel'tsev 1990, 108.

164 Novosel'tsev 1990, 108–109.

these areas or peoples provided the Khazars with taxes, since their own territory was poor in natural resources.[165] Thus, the Khazar "climates" were actually located outside the territory of Khazaria.

Constantine Porphyrogenitus is however quite specific in his description, noting that the "climates" were the richest Khazar lands, adjacent to Alania. Even if the Khazar state was indeed divided into "climates", ruled by tuduns, and its ruler Joseph really does enumerate the names of peoples with a similar status, this does not necessarily mean that the "climates" the Byzantine emperor writes about refer to the entire territory of Khazaria. On the contrary, the account refers only to the richest and most developed regions! This is why S. Pletneva assumes that the "climates" were located on the Crimean and the Taman Peninsulas.[166] It is hardly coincidental that during the eleventh century, Byzantine and Rus' sources identify Khazaria with precisely this region.[167]

Examining this particular issue, A. Tortika concludes that the "Khazar climates" were situated along the lower and the middle reaches of the Don up to Sarkel (including the Samkerts area and the region along the Manich and the Sala rivers) and encompassed Northwestern Khazaria (the lands between the Severski Donets, the Oskol and the Don). According to him, it is possible that some of the climates also included the Khazar territories in Dagestan.[168] This is, indeed, quite possible not only because of the well-developed Khazar economy, but also due to the fact that Dagestan borders Alania in the Caucasus. Further on, however, A. Tortika unexplainably follows the logic of A. Novosel'tsev, which he describes as "fruitful". He concurs that the climates were administrative-territorial units, governed by tuduns, and also expands them with the lands of the Burtas, the Volga Bulgars, etc. According to A. Tortika, Constantine Porphyrogenitus described regions, which were populated not by Khazars, but by "some other sedentary and agricultural ethno-tribal groups".[169]

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165 Novosel'tsev 1990, 108.

166 Pletneva 1996, 155.

167 For example, John Skylitzes describes the joint Rus'-Byzantine expedition of 1016 against Georgius Tzul in Khazaria that was located in the Crimea. (Sokolova 1971, 68). Even more interesting is the title of the Tmutarakan prince Rostislav Vladimirovich (1064–1066): "Archon of Matrakha (Tmutarakan), Zichia and the whole Khazaria" (Gadlo 1991, 5–7; Artamonov 1962, 440–441).

168 Tortika 2006a, 165; see also Tortika 2003.

169 Tortika 2006a, 165–166. The words of the Byzantine emperor are the following: "[Let it be known that] nine [climates] of Chazaria are adjacent to Alania, and the Alan can, if he be so minded, plunder these and so cause great damage and dearth among the Chazars: for from these nine [climates] come all the livelihood and plenty of Chazaria" (Constantine Porphyrogenitus. *De Administrando Imperio*, ch. 10, in Litavrin and Novosel'tsev 1989,

Constantine Porphyrogenitus mentions the Alans as a threat to Khazaria, since they lived near the "climates" and could plunder them and cause great damage.[170] It seems possible that the Alans caused trouble for Khazaria in the 920s, but after 932 Alania most probably became once more subjected to the Khazar Khaganate or at least turned into an ally of the Khazars.[171] In S. Pletneva's opinion, the description of the "climates" as the source of Khazaria's wealth indicates the strengthening of ties between the eastern and the western parts of the khaganate during the tenth century.[172] In the eighth century, the northern foothill areas of the Caucasus were populated by a Bulgar population. Its settlements were located in the immediate vicinity of the Alanian ones and limited the Alans' access to the Crimea and the lower reaches of the Don.[173] In the Stavropol Upland area alone, more than 50 permanent settlements have been found, similar in their economy to the Don Region. This area also maintained steady ties with the Crimea and the Taman Peninsula.[174] In S. Pletneva's opinion, the Bulgars displaced the Alans from the foothill areas and thus ensured for themselves a steady access to the mountain pastures. The Khumar hillfort, which was situated on the upper reaches of the Kuban' and had a garrison made up of Bulgars, was a large and

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53). This text can hardly lead to the conclusion that the "climates" were not inhabited by Khazars.

170 Constantine Porphyrogenitus. *De Administrando Imperio*, ch. 10.

171 The Byzantine influence among the Alans grew along with their Christianization and had a political significance in the early tenth century due to the work of patriarch Nicholas Mystikos (901–907; 912–925), and particularly during his second time on the patriarchal throne between 912 and 925 (Kuznetsov 1962, 127–129; Kulakovskii 1898, 3–8). As Al-Masudi's account shows, the influence held by Christianity and Byzantium over Alania, lasted until 932, when the Alan princes, who were Christians, renounced their faith. Artamonov 1962, 362–364 associates this with the *Cambridge Document* and its description of the war, waged against the Alans by the Khazar ruler Aaron with the help of the Oghuz (originally the Turks—*Author's note*). The same source names the Alans as the allies of Joseph against Byzantium during the following years (Golb and Pritsak1997, 141; for more information on these events, see Zuckerman 1995, 254–255). Therefore, the account of Constantine Porphyrogenitus does not allow for any blind assumptions that Alania was completely independent from Khazaria and moreover hostile towards the khaganate. See also Arzhantseva 2007a and 2007b.

172 Pletneva 1996, 155.

173 Kuznetsov 1962, 30, 76, and 88; Kovalevskaia 1981, 89; Bidzhiev 1989, 35–40; Arzhantseva 2007a, 83–87 and 2007b, 63.

174 Pletneva 1999, 188.

significant Khazar center in the lands of the Alans.[175] The control and security of the approaches to the Khazar (Saltovo) lands were also handled by the population that at that time had settled in the lands of the Kasogs.[176] To the northeast, the Alanian lands bordered the Kalmyk Steppe, where the Khazar pastures were located, although it is also possible that the area contained a system of Khazar settlements.[177]

After describing how the Khazars left Itil at the beginning of spring and each went to his field or vineyard, the Khazar ruler Joseph adds: "I and my princes and serfs proceed for a distance of 20 farsakhs until we reach the great river called B-d-shan and from thence we make the circuit of our country".[178] According to P. Golden, the Khazar ruler maintained the traditional Turkic nomadic cycle. Together with his court he left the city that served as a winter pasture in April and finished the cycle in December.[179] M. Artamonov and S. Pletneva express similar views. S. Pletneva assumes that the nobility of the western part of Khazaria also upheld a similar cycle.[180] T. Noonan also believes that the Khazar nobles continued to maintain the traditional nomadic cycle, which had an ideological rather than an economic significance and could thus be called "ritualistic nomadic pastoralism".[181] Thus, "those who did not belong to the ruling elite worked in the fields, a visible sign of their inferior political and social status [...] The khagan and, no doubt, most members of his retinue had their fields and vineyards in Itil [...] worked by tenant farmers or slaves and the bulk of the income/produce from them went to the owners, i.e., to the Khazar ruling elite".[182]

175 Pletneva 1999, 188–190; see also Bidzhiev 1984. The strong commercial ties between the Khumar hillfort and the Crimea are evidenced by pottery and amphorae, found in the area (Bidzhiev 1984, 123).

176 Gadlo 1989, 11 and 14.

177 Pletneva 1999, 203–205.

178 Kokovtsov 1932.

179 Golden 1980, 105.

180 Artamonov 1962, 398; Pletneva 1967, 47 and 147; Pletneva 1989, 24; Pletneva 1999, 33 and 203.

181 Noonan 1995–1997, 259.

182 Noonan 1995–1997, 259. According to an observation, made by Al-Istakhri and Ibn Hawqal, Itil's population was burdened with various taxes, used to support the khagan. And Ibn Rustah and Gardizi note that the vicegerent (bek) managed the collected *haraj* himself (Zakhoder 1962, 142 and 220–221; Novosel'tsev 1990, 142; Noonan 1995–1997, 290).

According to Iu. Kobishchanov, Joseph's account could be regarded as evidence that a system, similar to the so-called *poliudie*, existed in Khazaria.[183] "With the *poliudie*, the bearer of the early-state's authority (ruler-priest, sacred king) or his deputy (heir to the throne, a close relative, vicegerent, ambassador, etc.) traveled by a traditional route through his subordinate communes, principalities and border lands, implementing his privileges and performing his basic functions".[184]

The *poliudie* provided taxes from the natural surplus, collected in the main residence or one of the several residences of the ruler. Often, the ruler would be accompanied on his rounds by merchants, who exchanged goods with the various regions of the state.[185] Thus, the main economic functions of the *poliudie* were: "the support of the ruler and his family, his retinue and guards, the delivery of goods to the capital or the main cities and, lastly, the supply of goods like gold, slaves, etc. through the distant trade routes".[186] The *poliudie* also helped the ruler in maintaining his personal relationships with the members of his entourage and the population of the areas he passed through. At the same time the ruler reinforced his authority in the border regions and "accepted signs of loyalty, while restraining any disobedience and repelling enemy attacks".[187]

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The term "nomadic economy" distorts the understanding of Khazaria's economic development between the eighth and the tenth centuries. In her last works S. Pletneva accepts as fact "the general sedentariness of the khaganate's population and the mostly agricultural character of its economy, though seasonal nomadism and pastoral stock-breeding continued to be practiced in various areas".[188] According to her, the idea of the nomadism of the Khazars and their subjects is a myth that has been overcome long ago.[189] Already in 1976 she wrote that "the economy of the khaganate was based on a mix of stock-breeding and agriculture, widely developed crafts, a thriving domestic trade, where exports and imports essentially played the same role, and lastly, the

183 Kobishchanov 1999, 220–223. The existence of such a system in Khazaria is also accepted by Pletneva 2002, 117, as well as by Flerov 2007, 66 and Stepanov 2002b, 29.

184 Kobishchanov 1999, 3.

185 Kobishchanov 1999, 237–238.

186 Kobishchanov 1999, 240.

187 Kobishchanov 1999, 241–245.

188 Pletneva 1999, 207.

189 Pletneva 2005, 22.

custom duties and taxes, collected from trade caravans [...] and from weaker neighboring peoples".[190] In the same work, but referring to the tenth century, S. Pletneva adheres to the official view: "Khazaria's economy now relied entirely on its extensive international trade ties, which it had established with neighboring and distant peoples and nations in earlier times. Transit trade played a major role, often together with speculative resale. Khazaria began to transform into a typical parasitic state. Its rulers supported themselves through the charity of the commercial capital, which they had organized until then, since it needed an authority that could successfully protect its interests, to a greater or lesser extent, along with the protection of the trade cities where the entire economic life of the khaganate was concentrated [...] The large state entity that had a stable economic basis and a strong centralized power structure that had managed to unite the multiethnic people groups around it began to crumble. The only thing that remained was a small parasitic khanate that hindered the economic development of the neighboring lands and obstructed their trade with the East. A single significant strike proved to be enough to obliterate it from the face of the Earth. The last blow to Khazaria came from Rus' ".[191]

Such views were mandatory for the official Soviet historiography after the 1940s. Their imposition on science was a consequence of the campaign against cosmopolitism and anti-Semitism and began with an article in the Pravda Newspaper from December 1951, followed by several publications by B. Rybakov.[192] The objects of the criticisms were M. Artamonov and his team, who at that time were preparing the publication of their archaeological findings on the Saltovo monuments in the Don Region. Studies of Khazaria were also affected by the dethronement of Marrism after the notorious "linguistic" treatise of J. Stalin,[193] which was published the same year, 1951. Regardless of whether the theories of N. Marr have a scientific basis or not, he was widely cited in the scientific works of the 1930s and 1940s. Criticism against references to his theories became a way for denouncing "inconvenient" theories and teachings. In the specially published volume, *Against the Vulgarization of Marxism in Archaeology*, among the criticized scholars are M. Artamonov and V. Mavrodin, because of their works on the Khazar Khaganate.[194] S. Pletneva called 1951 "a terrible year". In her opinion, studies on Khazaria during that

190 Pletneva 1976, 57.

191 Pletneva 1976, 68–69.

192 Ivanov, V. "Ob odnoi oshibochnoi kontseptsii", *Pravda*, 25 dekabria 1951. Rybakov 1952 and 1953.

193 Stalin, J. *Marxism and problems of linguistics*. Moscow, 1951.

194 Merpert 1953. V. Abaev is also among the criticized historians (Krupnov 1953).

time suffered a "crushing blow".[195] M. Artamonov himself explained in 1962 that the Pravda article provoked "some sort of" interference in science. The article was followed by the publication of works, which "belittled" the historical significance of the Khazars and the state they had created.[196] During the 1960s, the publication of a number of fundamental works on the history of Khazaria became possible.[197] Through them, the image of the Khazar Khaganate as a "small parasitic state" and "a commercial state that hindered international trade" in the tenth century was introduced into Soviet science. The ones "to blame" for this were the Jews and Judaization.

L. Gumilev also fits into this scheme, albeit in a different way. He believes that the beginning of the tenth century was the time when the khaganate wielded its strongest political influence. This influence was not due to the Khazars, but to the Jews and the commercial capital. The Khazars were actually the most suppressed minority in their own land. According to the terminology of the Russian scientist, between the eighth and the ninth centuries the Khazar society was an "ethnic chimera" (as a result of the impossibility for the Jews and the steppe peoples to form a homogenic community), and in the tenth century it became a "socio-political" one.[198] This conclusion is based on L. Gumilev's theory of political anti-systems (among them are Judaism, Manichaeism, the Bogomil movement, but also Marxism and communism). Through the "zigzag

195 Pletneva 1999, 9.

196 Artamonov 1962, 37; it is probably worth wondering why Artamonov 1962, 357–358 claimed in this work that the Saltovo culture (its Alanian version in the forest-steppe zone) was destroyed by the Khazars. In 1958, he adhered to the more commonly accepted view that the Saltovo culture was destroyed by the Pechenegs, though (as far as can be understood from his writings) not immediately after their invasion (Artamonov 1958, 82–83). I think that the exclusion of the connection between the Saltovo culture and the Khazars was intended to provide an opportunity for a more thorough research of its Alanian version, at the very least.

197 Along with the work of M. Artamonov, B. Zakhoder's book, *Kaspiiskii svod svedenii o Vostochnoi Evrope I. Gorgan i Povolzh'e v IX–X vv.*, was published in 1962; it deals with the main questions regarding the history of Khazaria. In 1966 L. Gumilev published *Otkrytie Khazarii*. And in 1967 came the work of S. Pletneva, *Ot kochevii k gorodam. Saltovo-maiatskaia kul'tura*.

198 Gumilev 1997, 149, 156–176, 213, and 245. Thus, after Prince Sviatoslav's campaign in 965, "the demise of the Jewish commune in Itil gave freedom to the Khazars and all the other neighboring peoples" (Gumilev 1997, 242). Especially noteworthy is the depiction of Kievan Rus' as a liberator and protector of the peoples, oppressed by Khazar rule, including the Khazars themselves. In Petrukhin's view, the Soviet doctrine is outdated and officious (Petrukhin 2006a, 19). A certain return to this obsolete doctrine, especially regarding the issue of the Khazar khaganate's size and influence, can be seen in the article of Galkina 2006.

of history" they pass through the centuries, influencing different societies and peoples. Therefore, when assessing the works of L. Gumilev on Khazaria, one must bear in mind that he was describing Soviet Russia.[199]

It could be postulated that many of the theories regarding the Khazar state that were promoted in Soviet times have already been debunked by science. Accordingly, in V. Petrukhin's view, the Khazar economy was diverse and depended on the traditions of the various peoples of the khaganate He believes that Khazaria's archaeological monuments are "a vivid illustration of how an urban civilization emerged in a place where previously only steppes and ancient mounds could be found".[200] In V. Flerov's opinion, archaeological excavations have revealed "a sustainable and self-sufficient state".[201] According to T. Noonan, the agriculture, stock-breeding and handicrafts were equally well developed in Khazaria. Often, all three could be found in one settlement.[202] The historian identifies several areas where stock-breeding was predominant, like the Lower Volga's surroundings, including Volgograd Oblast or Voroshilovgrad Oblast along the Severski Donets.[203] In T. Noonan's opinion, the nomadic and (semi)sedentary peoples traded actively in the khaganate. "Many small producers traded their grain or animals for the foods, tools, and supplies they needed to survive".[204] The regions with a well-developed agriculture and handicrafts were interspersed with areas dominated by nomadic pastoralism. Among the main reasons for this were the climate and the environment, since agriculture could not be developed everywhere.[205]

4.6 The Impact of Climate on Khazaria's Development

There are many theories that try to explain the impact of climate on nomadism or the sedentarization processes. A drier climate was among the causes

199 This side of L. Gumilev's work was pointed out to me by A. Kal'onski, for which I am grateful. On the image of the Khazars in Russia, as well as the theories of L. Gumilev, see Shnirelman 2005, 2006, and 2007; Kizlov and Mikhailova 2004; Tortika and Mikheev 2004.

200 Petrukhin 2006a, 23.

201 Flerov 2006, 61.

202 Noonan 1995–1997, 293.

203 Noonan 1995–1997, 264.

204 Noonan 1995–1997, 290.

205 Noonan 1995–1997, 264. This view is shared by Novosel'tsev 1990, 114, according to whom settlement occurred in places with favorable conditions for agriculture. Areas where the conditions did not aid agriculture continued to be dominated by pastoral nomadism. See also Stepanov 2002b, 32–35.

for the emergence of the nomadic economy.[206] On the threshold between the second and the first millennium BC, the balance between the elements of the traditional mixed stock-breeding and agricultural economy in some mountain-steppe regions was disrupted and various communities were forced into nomadism. They abandoned agriculture since it could no longer sustain them and moved on to extensive pastoralism that proved to be more favorable for them.[207]

Pastoralism prevailed in the steppe zone due to the limited opportunities for the development of agriculture. Irrigation systems could only by afforded by financially stable states. Therefore, the nomads most often settled down in regions that were suitable for the development of agriculture.[208] It is important to bear in mind that dry climate can cause both a transition from agriculture to pastoralism and vice versa, due to the reduction of pasture lands.[209] It is therefore worth wondering whether the significant expansion of agricultural territories in the steppe zone of Eastern Europe after the second half of the seventh century was related to climate change.

Climate warming during the sixth and seventh centuries led to the growth of cultivable lands in Western Europe.[210] In the mid-seventh century, a long period of drought that had begun during the first century AD reached its peak. According to I. Baranov, there is a direct relation between the settlement of the nomads and that lengthy drought, which caused a reduction of pasture lands.[211] Agriculture continued to grow in the steppe zone of Eastern Europe until the next climatic changes occurred during the tenth century.

Historical climatology is still not quite accurate as a science. Nevertheless, based on observations of changes that have occurred in the development of Alpine glaciers, as well as some other data, it is possible to indicate periods of climate warming and dry spells. It can thus be postulated that the climate warmed in the period between 750 and 1150. Between the ninth and the eleventh centuries, the warmer climate triggered a drought. It is, however, not clear how climate changes affected the various regions of Europe, since the impact of climate warming and droughts on the economy can be both positive and negative, depending on the geographical environment. Moreover, the difference in the average annual temperature during the period of climate warming

206 Khazanov 1994, 95.
207 Markov 1976, 278.
208 Khazanov 1994, 200; Markov 1976, 279.
209 Khazanov 1994, 200.
210 Favier 2002, 63.
211 Baranov 1990, 17.

between the eighth and the twelfth centuries and the cooling that followed afterwards could hardly have exceeded 1° C.[212]

According to L. Gumilev, a period of significant climate warming occurred between the late ninth and the early eleventh centuries. That was the time when the level of the Caspian Sea rose. The scholar builds a plausible-sounding theory regarding the impact of such periods on the peoples of the steppe and forest zones. In his view, climate changes are affected by changes in the direction of the Atlantic cyclones. And since the Caspian Sea receives water mainly from the Volga, the rise in its level signified an increase in the humidity of the forest zone. Swamps appeared in the low parts of the Volga-Oka Interfluve, and rivers swelled, causing big floods that proved detrimental for the development of the local economies. At the same time, the steppes dried out and turned into a desert. The strength of the steppe peoples waned and they were forced to split into smaller groups and seek refuge in more humid places. This is how L. Gumilev explains the migration of the Pechenegs across the steppes of the Northern Black Sea region, where during the late ninth century the conditions of living were better than in the Asian Steppes. Climate warming, however, did not cause any damages in the Khazar state and even led towards its greatest power by stripping the surrounding peoples of their resistance abilities; furthermore, the Khazar economy was based on trade which was not affected by climate changes.[213]

L. Gumilev is referring to the Judaized elite of the khaganate. The Khazars' own economy was negatively affected by the warming of the climate. Their fields and gardens were flooded by the Caspian Sea.[214] At the same time, the conditions in the Terek Valley deteriorated, but those in the Don Valley did not, since this river gathers its waters in the forest zone where the humidity levels had risen.[215]

Climate changes are certainly of great importance, but the application of any general theory carries a risk of allowing many inaccuracies. The natural diversity of the steppe and its surroundings suggests various possibilities for development, triggered by the same climate changes. This is also stated by L. Gumilev himself regarding the valleys of the Terek and Don Rivers. This is why his conclusions and especially their general application are met with numerous objections.

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212 Ladurie 1971, 179–187.

213 Gumilev 1997, 65–66 and 211–213; Gumilev 2003, 60–63 and 114; Gumilev 1977, 97. For more details on the theory of climate changes, see Gumilev 1966; Aleksin and Gumilev 1963.

214 Gumilev 2003, 114.

215 Gumilev 2003, 179.

L. Gumilev believes that the desert is "hostile" to stock-breeding and does not study the Middle Asia region. In B. Vainberg's opinion, however, this contradicts the facts of ancient and medieval history and archaeology, as well as all the available ethnographic data. The deserts of Middle Asia and the forest-steppe zone area, which is also excluded from L. Gumilev's theory, "swallowed" parts of the nomadic population that passed through the steppes during unfavorable periods, while the stock-breeders from the desert area of Middle Asia sometimes became engaged in this migration.[216] According to B. Vainberg, "the Pecheneg migration from the Cis-Aral Region cannot be seen as an indication of the desiccation and alteration of the climate, since their place was occupied by the Oghuz, who in their turn were ousted by the Kipchaks, and this in general indicates something quite different: that the nomads actively fought for the lands of the Cis-Aral Region during the period between the eighth and the twelfth centuries".[217] B. Vainberg also rejects the connection that L. Gumilev makes between the variations in the level of the Caspian Sea and the climate changes in Eurasia. The sea level did rise during this period, but in the view of both M. Artamonov and S. Pletneva, as well as according to M. Magomedov, its waters did not flood the gardens, vineyards and settlements of the Khazar population living in Dagestan and along the northern coast, where Itil was located.[218]

V. Aksenov sees a direct corelation between the destruction of the skeletons in the Netailovo necropolis burials in the Severski Donets Valley with climate changes that occurred during the ninth and the tenth centuries. At that time, a period of significant humidification began in Europe. The waters of the Dnieper rose, along with the groundwaters that fed the river. The level of the groundwaters probably also rose in the area of the Netailovo necropolis. This could explain the poor condition of the bone remains in it. This change occurred during the tenth century.[219]

The increase in humidity could have had a negative impact on the agricultural economy in the Don Region. Thus, L. Gumilev is probably right in assuming that climate changes in the tenth century caused the disruption of the

216 Vainberg 1990, 46–47.

217 Vainberg 1990, 58. According to Kradin 2001b, 23, contemporary paleogeographic data does not support a direct relation between the periods of desiccation or humidification of the steppes with those of decay or prosperity of the nomadic empires. See also Pritsak 1981a, 11.

218 Artamonov and Pletneva 1970, 91; Magomedov 1983, 181–182; Vainberg 1990, 58. According to other researchers, the period of warming and desiccation lasted from the sixth to the ninth century, with the level of the Caspian Sea remaining low. The forest zone saw little rain and the rivers were shallow. See Tortika 2006a, 463–466.

219 Aksenov 2006b, 59–60.

Khazar economy. These changes, however, did not affect the nomadic economy, as evidenced by the growing power of the Pechenegs and the Oghuz, for example. Rather, the crisis had more to do with agriculture. But it probably had more serious consequences for the population of the Don area than for the people inhabiting the Cis-Caspian Region. The majority of the settlements of the Saltovo culture were abandoned. At the same time—during the second half of the tenth century and the first half of the eleventh century—the Borshevo settlements along the upper reaches of the Don and along the Voronezh River were also abandoned.[220] The same fate befell the settlements of the Romny culture (that were related to the Severians) after the end of the ninth century.[221] This is how the settlement structure, spread across a vast region of Eastern Europe, disintegrated during the tenth century. If the Pechenegs had caused serious concerns for the Saltovo population in the Severski Donets Valley, it would be only logical for it to try and build an effective defense system.[222] In this sense, an interesting example is the existence of abandoned unfinished fortifications like the Volchia hillfort.[223]

Assuming that the problems of the agricultural economy in the Don area proved to be of essential significance for Khazaria's survival, it would be there that the Rus' subsequently penetrated the Khazar defenses. The population of the agricultural settlements probably gradually switched to a stock-breeding economy, but the steppe was occupied by the Pechenegs. They could not be possibly ousted by a population that had lost its economic footing.[224]

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220 Moskalenko 1981, 148; Vinnikov 1995, 123.

221 Timoshchuk 1995, 185.

222 According to Artamonov 1962, 357, such raids could, at the most, have caused the population to move to neighboring areas that were more secure. "In most cases, the relations, established between the nomads and the sedentary population that did not have powers for resistance, were those of dependence of the latter to the first, with a payment of a regular tribute as opposed to the uncertain earnings from plunders. In the case of the Saltovo culture something entirely different is manifested—its complete destruction".

223 Koloda 1999. An abandoned incomplete fortification dating from the first half of the tenth century can also be found on the territory of the Tsimliansk hillfort (Pletneva 1996, 112). The Dmitrievka and Maiaki hillforts were most probably abandoned as well (Flerov 1993, 64). And at the site of the Verkhnii Saltov hillfort, for example, can be found traces of fire and destruction. In Aksenov's view, if the second half of the tenth century is to be regarded as the upper limit of the Saltovo culture, these destructions were caused by the campaigns of Prince Sviatoslav between 965 and 968 (Aksenov 2006a, 76).

224 In Mikheev's opinion, the Pecheneg invasion caused significant dislocations among the Saltovo population in the steppe region Parts of it migrated north, towards the forest-steppe Saltovo settlements, while others returned to nomadism, joining the Pecheneg hordes. Thus, Khazaria lost its fertile lands and pastures and its economic system was shaken (Mikheev 1985, 99).

A similar depopulation also occurred on the territory of Danube Bulgaria, in Dobrudzha. Furthermore, it remained sparsely populated until the sixteenth century.[225] Without belittling the significance of the invasions, G. Atanasov presumes that climate changes that occurred during the tenth century caused droughts, which drove farmers away from Dobrudzha and the Ludogorie region towards areas with lower temperatures and year-round flowing rivers. "After the droughts and the withdrawal of farmers in the mid-eleventh century, it is only logical that the subsequent demographic vacuum in Dobrudzha and the Ludogorie area was filled up by nomadic stockbreeders—first the Pechenegs, followed by the Uz and Cumans and later by the Tatars and the Yuruks".[226]

While it remains unclear whether climate changes had an impact on this matter or not, it should nevertheless be noted that between the sixth and the tenth centuries, the irrigation agriculture, metallurgy and handicrafts of a population with a semi-nomadic and semi-sedentary economy in the Altai region grew markedly. During this period, the economy of the population there was much more sedentary than in later centuries.[227]

Between the tenth and the twelfth centuries, a significant reduction in the number of settlements (four to five times) and a similarly radical increase in the area and economic territories of the other settlements occurred in the North Caucasus. The role of agriculture in maintaining the transhumance in the mountain and foothill regions grew in importance. Nomadic pastoralism also became more significant in the steppe region.[228]

When analyzing the climatic impact on the development of the Khazar economy, it must be borne in mind that the changes that occurred did not happen suddenly or even in the scope of a decade. As the population of the Khazar Khaganate combined extremely diverse economic practices, dictated by the natural conditions in various areas, the changes in the climate likely led to similarly diverse possibilities for the development of the economy. For the time being, climate changes cannot be regarded as the main reason for the decline of Khazaria after the mid-tenth century, although the available scientific data on this topic does give sufficient grounds for more thorough research in this area.

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225 Atanasov 2001, 191–202.

226 Atanasov 2001, 196.

227 Markov 1976, 42.

228 Kovalevskaia 1981b, 224 and 228. According to Arzhantseva 2007b, 66–67, the abandonment of many Alanian settlements could have been caused by a change in the composition of the soil due to earthquakes.

CHAPTER 5

The "Internal" Ethnic Communities in Khazaria

The ways in which the khagan maintained his authority and the reasons for his subjects' loyalty have yet to be clarified. It would be too simplistic to argue that the Khazars were able to impose themselves by force on the other ethnic groups, thus ensuring the integrity of the state. Another issue which remains unclear is which ethnic groups (if any, besides the Khazars) willingly embraced the khagan's authority and implemented the khaganate's policies in the various regions. It could be argued that the "internal" communities of Khazaria were constituted of bearers of the Saltovo culture (the Khazars, Bulgars and the Alans), which was the official (state) culture of the khaganate. The Bulgars and the Alans, both subjects of the khaganate, neighbored countries that were akin to them—namely, Alania and Volga Bulgaria (Black Bulgaria poses a separate problem). Both countries had complicated relations with Khazaria, since they were part of the khaganate. Actually, Alania and Volga Bulgaria can be classified as "external" communities in relation to Khazaria. The information from written sources, according to which during some period or other Alania and Volga Bulgaria had or could have had military conflicts with Khazaria, cannot be regarded as proof of their status in the khaganate or of the subordination of their rulers to the khagan. Their subjugated position in the Khazar Khaganate should be regarded as a fact by the tenth century, and especially by the 950s (the time of the Khazar ruler Joseph), although this idea is rejected by most historians, especially with regard to Alania.

It is possible that Danube Bulgaria also influenced the "internal" communities in Khazaria, especially during the tenth century when it was already a Christian state. The Bulgars in the khaganate were mostly pagans, although many among them were Christians and Muslims. Religious affiliation often brings with it political influence. It can be therefore argued that the political relations between Khazaria, Byzantium and the Arab Caliphate had an impact on the Bulgars and Alans in the khaganate. Or in other words, the Bulgars and Alans can be defined as both "internal" and "external" ethnic communities in the Khazar state. It should be borne in mind that the Alanian and especially the Bulgar communities, which were spread over the whole territory of the khaganate, were all on different levels of subordination to the central authorities. What should also be noted is that in the vicinity of the Saltovo culture the Bulgars probably constituted the majority of Khazaria's population.

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While the Saltovo culture provides us with some clues regarding the "internal" communities of the khaganate, the role of the ethnic groups with a different culture remains unclear. The information scientists have gathered until now is highly insufficient. Nevertheless, the extent to which the Burtas, Kasogs and, during the tenth century, also the Oghuz can be defined as "internal" communities for Khazaria should be examined more closely. This list can be extended with quite a few Caucasian, Eastern European and Middle Asian peoples. The line between "internal" and "external" in the Khazar Khaganate cannot be defined without acknowledging the different possibilities for interaction between the ethnic groups and the central authorities, the different standing of the various regions (which often had a mixed ethnic contingent) and the state entities that were subjugated to the khaganate. At the same time, truly unacceptable theories are maintained in science, that deal with the ethnic interpretation of the monuments of the Khazar Khaganate or the political subordination (dependency) of various regions that were a part of it.

5.1 Problems of the State Structure

According to the neoevolutional theory, Khazaria can be regarded as a so-called chiefdom or it can be defined as an "early state". Without going into detail on these two concepts, let me state here that the line between them is quite blurry, especially after the introduction of concepts like *complex-chiefdom* or the term *super-complex chiefdom* that N. Kradin uses with regard to the steppe empires.[1] The gradual expansion of the scope and characteristics of the chiefdom concept have brought it even closer to the early state one, making both of them difficult to distinguish from one another. As a result they began to be used according to the preferences of each historian.

Of particular importance are several characteristics of the chiefdom concept, which interweave with the ones of the early state concept. They include the sacral status of the supreme ruler and the associated with it broad support for the regime by the subordinate population; the inclusion of other peoples

1 Kradin 1995 and 2001b; see also Stepanov 2003c, 44–46 and 54–55. The opinion of Tortika 2007 remains unclear to me: according to him, the population of the Don Region was organized in several simple chiefdoms, united in complex ones, which in turn were subordinate to the super-complex one of the Khazar Khaganate. See also Tortika 2006a, 133–143. Tortika 2006a, 141–143 nevertheless admits that the term "complex chiefdom" is "schematic" and "clumsy". A much more suitable term for Khazaria would be "khaganate", which includes all the traits of the complex chiefdom, as defined by N. Kradin. See also Di Cosmo 2004, 167–173.

(tribes) through the formation of some sort of confederation or their subjection via taxes. These peoples (tribes) were of diverse origins, but were culturally homogeneous within the state, which contributed to their ethnic integration. The nobility (which also performed the functions of a state bureaucracy) was concentrated in various trade and craft centers, which in time became administrative hubs.[2]

It is quite possible that the Saltovo culture was the homogeneous cultural community, on which the existence of the Khazar Khaganate depended. During the ninth and tenth centuries it included not only the Bulgars, Alans and the Khazars (the main bearers of this culture), but also the Ugrians, the Pechenegs and the Oghuz, the Slavs and various Caucasian tribes. They should all be defined as "internal" for Khazaria, regardless of the fact that the khaganate was in close proximity to states, formed by these very tribes and peoples. They in turn were an important "external" factor, which influenced the integration processes in Khazaria. Often, these states were part of the khaganate. The system of (cultural, commercial and ethnic) interaction between the peoples of the khaganate was first labeled by P. Golden, who called it *Pax Chazarica* (or the Khazar World/Order). This interaction was based on the acceptance of the khagan's authority by the society in question.[3] According to S. Romashov, the Khazar Order ensured good neighborly relations (or the peaceful coexistence) between the numerous peoples of the khaganate.[4] This point of view is somewhat idealistic, since one should not exclude the possibility of internal conflicts in the Khazar World. The khaganates are one good example of constant conflicts between the various ethnic groups that constituted them. In this sense, military conflicts were not the reason behind the secession of various regions or the collapse of the khaganate. They did not always lead to significant changes in the structure of the lands that were under the rule of the khagan.

If one was to look away from the evolutionary approach in search of a model that can be used in the case of Khazaria, one would come to the conclusion that it was a state entity and a version of the steppe empires. Steppe empires differ in their state structure, administrative system and territorial division.[5] Perhaps closest to the Khazar Khaganate is the Khaganate of the Turks, along

2 On these issues, see: Claessen and Skalník 1978, especially the article of Cohen 1978, included in this collected volume, as well as the articles of Khazanov 1978 and 1994, 164–169; Earle 1987; Vasil'ev 1980 and 1981; Pletneva 1982, 79–80; Mel'nikova 1995; Belkov 1995a and 1995b.

3 See Stepanov 2005a, 9–10.

4 Romashov 2002–2003, 82–83 and 2004, 218.

5 Pritsak 1981a, 17–18; Barfield 2001a and 2001b; Kradin and Skrynnikova 2006, 51–55; Kradin 2001b; Khazanov 1994, 231–233; Kliashtornyi and Sultanov 2000, 8–11 and 80–82.

with some of the subsequent khaganates from Middle and Central Asia. The conquered tribes and peoples kept their inner autonomy (they were also often able to maintain an independent foreign policy), while being obliged to pay tributes to the central authorities and to send troops when necessary. Thus, many historians call the steppe empires "confederations"—a term which is unacceptable to some like A. Khazanov, or "federations"—which as a term is rejected by S. Romashov.[6] Taxes were collected through the so-called tributary system, which was used in the Turkic Khaganate, but also in many other steppe empires. The taxed communities retained their social and economic structure (independence). This system prevented the unification of the leading ethnic group's nobles (which typically belonged to the "royal" tribe) with the nobility of the conquered peoples, which is thought to be one of the causes for conflicts in the khaganate. In some cases, but not always (not in the whole subjugated territory) the central authorities sent out their own representatives (tuduns), who, without taking over the functions of the local authorities, kept track of tribute-collecting from trade and local taxes. Alternatively, the subjugation of large territories by a steppe empire was manifested through the recognition of the khagan's supremacy, which also depended on the ability of the leading peoples or tribes (often the tribes that executed the khagan's authority in various regions were more than one, and were even of different origins) to impose it by force. When governance was weak, conflicts followed, but they did not lead to the collapse of the khaganate. According to A. Khazanov, such was the governance in the subjugated territories of the states of the Scythians, Huns, Wusuns, Turks, Khazars, etc.[7]

P. Golden assumes that at the top of the socio-political pyramid in the steppe empires stood the family of the khagan, along with his ("royal") tribe. Next to them stood the "inner" tribes, which had been absorbed into the state (the "confederation") in the very beginning. A part of the "inner" tribes were the "kinsmen" tribes, from which the wives of the ruling nobility stemmed. The tribes that had willingly joined the khaganate retained their own rulers, but sometimes accepted a representative of the ruling tribe for some administrative posts. The "outer" tribes were incorporated into the state by force. Their rulers were usually replaced by members of the ruling dynasty. Below them in

6 Khazanov 1994, 152; Romashov 2002–2003, 83.

7 Khazanov 1975, 159–163 and 190–191 (on the Khazar Khaganate, see 260); a similar form of subjugation was also exercised in ancient Kangju (Khazanov 1975, 161). On Kangju, see also Gabuev 2007. See also Kradin 2001b, 26–27.

the hierarchy stood the tributary vassals (they were often sedentary agricultural and trade communities), the enslaved tribes, the slaves, etc.[8]

The Turks imposed various forms of "vassal-tax" dependency in their conquered territories. The communities that the Turks subjugated in Middle Asia, for example, retained their social, economic and political systems, with their sole obligation towards the khaganate being to pay tribute, the collection of which was overseen by the tuduns. The local rulers received Turkic titles and thus became part of the khaganate's administrative system. In turn, they were obliged to send out troops when the need arose. The subordination of the Sogdian urban centers, for example, was limited to tribute payment.[9]

In the Uyghur Khaganate (744–840), the subjugated tribes were also taxed and the tax collection process was overseen by officials sent by the central authorities. Some of these tribes, however, were considered to be equal to the Uyghurs (such as the Basmils and the Eastern Karluks).[10] The Khakasian state (the Kyrgyz Khaganate after 840), which succeeded the Uyghur one, also used such a system.[11] Besides the steppe empires, a similar structure was also established in Caucasian Albania,[12] whose traditions were close to those in the Khazar Khaganate.

Indeed, the administrative system of the steppe empires was surprisingly uniform in its ways of subjecting the peoples that had been conquered, subjugated or otherwise absorbed. The Khazar Khaganate, however, differed in a way. This may be due to either a lack of sufficient information on the various khaganates, or to the simultaneous existence of practices in the Khazar state that were specific to steppe empires, which were far apart both in time and space. Khazaria was not familiar with and did not use the appanage-rota (ulus)

8 Golden 2003, no. 1, 50–51. Tortika 2006a, 50 is of a different point of view: according to him, the term "inner" referred only to the ruling family or tribe, while "outer" (for example "the common people", "Budun" among the Turks, the "Black" Khazars or V-n-n-tr in the *Khazar Correspondence*) was used for the subjugated nomadic tribes that did not associate their origins with a legendary or actual founder of the nomadic alliance.

9 Khazanov 1994, 255–257; Kliashtornyi and Sultanov 2000, 86–91; Gumilev 2004a, 171.

10 Khazanov 1994, 257; Gumilev 2004a, 413–419; Pletneva 1982, 89.

11 Pletneva 1982, 93.

12 Gadzhiev 2002, 230 and 240. There was no centralized state system in Sogd. The Sogdian states formed a kind of confederary, while each one of them had its own ruling dynasty. This system existed until the end of the seventh century. Sogd did not have an organized state religion, although the majority of its population adhered to Mazdaism and Zurvanism, which included some Hellenistic and Indian Buddhist influences. There was also a religious tolerance towards other cults (such as Nestorianism and Manichaeism (Frye and Litvinsky 1996, 466–467).

system, which was typical for the Turkic khaganates. In accordance with it, the main lands were divided into lots, which were managed by members of the same family (the sons, brothers or other relatives of the khagan). These lots were not held for life and had a hierarchical status. In case of the supreme ruler's death, he was succeeded by the next in rank (the eldest brother, if there was one, if not—by the oldest one of the ruler's sons or nephews). The transition of power in the separate land lots was done in the same way.[13] In Eastern Europe after the ninth century, such a system existed in Kievan Rus'.[14]

With regard to Khazaria, the Khazar ruler Joseph was adamant that the power passed down from father to son. This is also confirmed by John Exarch,[15] who adds: "and from brother to brother". What he probably meant was that in the absence of a direct heir (son), the power remained in the family. Such an assumption is also possible in light of the dynastic line, described by Joseph, which contained one instance of a throne inheritance by a brother. But those accounts are from the ninth and tenth centuries.

Although it is highly unlikely, it nevertheless could be presumed that an appanage system existed during the pagan period of the Khazar state. This is also backed up by the available information on the structure of Kubrat's Great Bulgaria, where various regions were governed by the sons of the Bulgar ruler.[16] During the next period, however, neither Danube Bulgaria nor Volga Bulgaria used this system.

When comparing the state structure of Danube Bulgaria with that of Khazaria, both with common roots in the steppe empires tradition, one major difference should be highlighted, since it had an impact on both the ideologi-

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13 Gumilev 2004a, 65–66; Golden 1980, 40–41; a similar system was used by the Huns: in their state, power was originally passed down from father to son (Kradin 2001a, 56–57, 145, and 227–229; see also Khazanov 1975, 195–199). The transition of power from father to son and from uncle to nephew was not compatible in the steppe empires. Therefore, the switch from one practice to the other was not an uncommon phenomenon. Both practices were based on the belief that sovereignty belonged to the whole ruling family, and not only to one of its branches (Khazanov 1975, 195–196).

14 See for instance Shepard and Franklin 2000, 223–226, 268–282, and 355–360; Golden 2003, no. 1, 39.

15 Ioan Ekzarkh. *Shestodnev*, in Kochev 2000, 159; for the so-called *patrimonial state*, see Stepanov 1999a, 63–64. In front of St. Cyril the Philosopher the Khazars explicitly stated their custom to place on the throne rulers from one family (*Prostranno zhitie na Kiril*, in Dinekov 1963, 27).

16 On this issue, see Iordanov 1996b and 1997. I am inclined to think, however, that the historian's theory that this system was also used in Danube Bulgaria is not quite acceptable. See also Tortika 2006a, 49–50.

cal and the administrative level. Two rock inscriptions (that of Kana Omurtag (814–831) and that of Kana Persian (836–852)) highlight the authority of the Bulgarian rulers over "many Bulgarians".[17] Especially notable is the lack of enumeration of other peoples in the official documents or monuments of Danube Bulgaria (with the understandable exception during the reign of Tsar Simeon). This tradition was maintained until the time of the last ruler of the First Bulgarian Empire Ivan Vladislav (1015–1018), who was titled "autocrat of the Bulgarians" in the *Bitola Inscription*.[18]

The letter of the Khazar ruler Joseph reveals a significant difference. In it, he describes himself as king of Togarmah, after which he enumerates ten more peoples that stem from the Biblical Togarmah (see on pp. 41–47) Joseph states that he is a descendant of Khazar, one of Togarmah's sons, but does not name himself ruler of the Khazars; instead, he recounts the many peoples that pay him tribute. The lack of such a list in Danube Bulgaria could explain the significant differences in the state structure of both states. For example, it can explain why the rulers of Danube Bulgaria never laid claim on the *khagan* title.[19] The khaganate probably stood for a state entity which consisted of many autonomous political units. This is exactly what Joseph highlights in his letter, when talking about the peoples and territories under his rule. The situation in Danube Bulgaria was quite the opposite: there, rulers emphasized their authority only over the Bulgarians (the "many Bulgarians"). Speaking in simple terms, Danube Bulgaria was the state of the Bulgarians, while the Khazar Khaganate was a state of many peoples, which—according to Joseph's letter—all stemmed from Togarmah (including the Bulgars, from whom the banished Unogundurs broke free).

Immediately after naming all the sons of Togarmah, Joseph states that when his ancestors (the Khazars) were still few in numbers, they waged war against many peoples that were stronger than them. Some of them were driven out, while others paid tribute "to this day". Then Joseph states that the land he now lives in was formerly ruled by the V-n-n-trs (the Unogundurs). They were numerous as the sand of the sea, but could not withstand the Khazars and fled

17 See Beshevliev 1992, 142–143 and 216; for various interpretations, see: Nikolov 1997; cf. Stepanov 1999a, 84.

18 Zaimov and Zaimova 1970, 33. According to Stanilov 2003b, 13–14, the expression ("ruler of many Bulgarians or of the Bulgarians") is part of the "ideological concept of autocratic rule" in Bulgaria.

19 Other explanations of this fact are also possible. On this issue, see Stepanov 2000, 197–224, 2003a, 2005b, and 2008.

to the Danube Delta region.[20] Joseph emphasizes the importance of the banishment of the V-n-n-tr people for the establishment of the Khazar state (there is no mention whatsoever of any other tribe in this sense). At the same time, this is the only reference to the Unogundurs in the letter of the Khazar ruler. It is they, and not all of the Bulgars, that are indicated as the main opponent, after whose defeat the foundations of the Khazar Khaganate were laid (according to the interpretation of Joseph's letter).[21]

Joseph mentions the Bulgars two more times in his letter, but as B-lg-r (son of Togarmah) and Bul-g-r (a people who paid tribute, most probably the Volga Bulgars). We should therefore ask ourselves whether the Khazar nobility could distinguish between the banished Bulgars (V-n-n-tr) and those that obeyed the khagan. What should also be taken into account is the possibility that some Bulgars were part of the khaganate and its army long before the defeat of Great Bulgaria. This is evidenced by archaeological finds in Dagestan (which M. Magomedov regarded as the initial territory of the Khazar Khaganate), where Bulgars among the main ethnic groups during the whole period of the khaganate's existence.[22] This could also explain to a certain degree the ambiguous behavior of Kubrat's sons during the war with Khazaria.

The literature dedicated to Great Bulgaria, the Bulgar ruler Kubrat and his sons is vast. It is impossible, and also quite unnecessary, to examine here the genesis and development of all the different opinions on the matter, so let me just mention the ones that focus on the different attitude of Kubrat's sons towards Khazaria. I shall not linger on the question whether Bezmer from the *Nominalia of the Bulgarian Khans* and Batbayan, mentioned by Theophanes and Nicephorus, were actually the same person. I. Bozhilov and Kh. Dimitrov assume that Batbayan pursued a conciliatory policy with Khazaria, i.e. that he accepted the khagan's authority (and began paying tribute to the Khazars), which was why his brothers did not recognize his authority and dispersed, along with their respective tribes. Initially, there was no consensus among the brothers regarding their policy towards Khazaria. The Unogundurs of Asparukh

20 Here and further on the quotes or references to the texts of King Joseph's letters are from Kokovtsov 1932.

21 See Pletneva 1976, 22; Magomedov 1983, 178; Shapira 2002, 215. According to Giuzelev 1981, 124, "a focal point in Khazar historical memory is the conquest of the land of the Proto-Bulgarian Unogundurs (V-n-n-t-r) and their subsequent pursuit by the Khazars, i.e. this is the fate of the Proto-Bulgarians of Asparukh". In Rashev's opinion, Joseph's account indicates that "the beginning of Khazar history was initiated by the resettlement of the Bulgars" (Rashev 2001, 161).

22 Magomedvov 1983, 87, 91, and 177; Fedorov and Fedorov 1978, 92, 115–123, 139, and 151–160; Dimitrov 1987, 67–68; Pletneva 1976, 22 and 26–28; Pletneva 1997, 36.

(the V-n-n-trs) were the most active in their resistance against Khazaria, but they did not get support from Batbayan and were therefore easily defeated by the Khazars and forced to migrate.[23]

S. Pletneva expresses a similar opinion, assuming that the Khazars fought only with the Bulgars of Asparukh (the Unogundurs, the V-n-n-trs), who were not supported by Batbayan. The majority of the Bulgars remained in their lands and accepted the supremacy of the khagan.[24] It should be assumed that some Bulgar communities became an integral part of the khaganate during its very establishment, while others were absorbed later, probably without much resistance. There, they had a status equal to that of the Khazars. Indirect proof of the fact that there were Bulgars in the Khazar army (who were neither mercenaries, nor sent there by force) can perhaps be seen in Tsar Simeon's (893–927) attitude towards the Khazars, captured in 894 after having fought on the side of Byzantium: he ordered their noses to be chopped off.[25]

It is apparent that the Khazar ruler Joseph distinguishes the Unogundurs (the V-n-n-trs) from the other Bulgar communities in Khazaria. But he does not mention all the Bulgar groups that inhabited the khaganate and whose existence is documented by both written sources (the Black or Inner Bulgars) and the archaeological ones. It should be borne in mind that in his letter Joseph talks of ethnic groups when describing the eastern parts of the khaganate (mostly along the Volga) and of the peoples who inhabited the mountainous part of the North Caucasus (where he also does not mention Bulgars, although there is evidence of their significant presence there). In the western part of Khazaria (the Crimea and the Don River Valley), he mentions only cities and settlements (in the Crimea, the Taman Peninsula and along the lower reaches of the Don) without specifying which ethnic groups inhabited them.

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23 Bozhilov and Dimitrov 1995, 30–31; Dimitrov 1989, 50–52.

24 Pletneva 1976, 22; Pletneva 1980, 29; Pletneva 1997, 36–43. See also Tortika 2006a, 68, 94, 207, and 472; Naumenko 2004a, 63–64; Zuckerman 2001, 330; Novosel'tsev 1990, 91. According to Dimitrov 1987, 76, "the Khazar expansion against the Proto-Bulgarians did not lead to any serious exodus of the latter from these lands, but rather helped impose the political supremacy of the newly established Khazar Khaganate".

25 Zlatarski 1994, 289. According to Tortika 2006a, 87, the Bulgars were gradually "absorbed" into the Khazar union and formed troops that were used for military action in places such as the Crimea or for the conquest of the Slavic tribes. He assumes that the Bulgars who were subject to Batbayan controlled the new territories (Tortika 2006a, 472). In Tortika's opinion, members of the Bulgar nobility entered the Khazar elite, while remaining at the helm of the local "nomadic" Bulgar communities. Those who retained their tribal structure and military potential later became the basis of the Black Bulgaria that Constantine Porphyrogenitus wrote about (Tortika 2006a, 68, 87, 105, 127, and 207).

Immediately afterwards he names the Pechenegs who paid him tribute. It could therefore be concluded that Joseph distinguished between the statuses of the various lands. When he describes territories, inhabited by various ethnic groups, he means autonomous states and tribes that were nominally a part of the khaganate and whose subordination was expressed in tribute payment and in some cases—in troop sending when necessary.[26] When he does not mention ethnic groups, but instead talks of urban (settlement) centers, the Khazar ruler perhaps means his own Khazar territories, regardless of the ethnic groups that inhabited them (he also never mentions areas, inhabited by Khazars). It is also worth noting that Joseph omits many centers, situated to the north or northwest of Sarkel (along the Severski Donets and along the upper reaches of the Don), which have been discovered through archaeological research.

An interesting touch is the description "as the sand of the sea", which Joseph uses for the V-n-n-tr people (Asparukh's Unogundurs), who were defeated and chased out of their lands by the fewer in number Khazars. Although it is not stated outright, it is perhaps implied that the Khazars, initially few in number, later became numerous. As was already pointed out, the victory over Asparukh's Bulgars laid the foundations of the Khazar state, according to the understanding of Joseph. This expression corresponds to the "many Bulgarians" one, used in Bulgarian inscriptions. V. Beshevliev seeks its parallel in the *Orkhon Inscriptions*, where it is also stated that the khagans transformed a small people into a numerous one.[27] Such descriptions are part of the ruler ideology in the steppe empires. This expression in particular has a Biblical parallel—and an Old Testament one at that—which can cast a somewhat different light on its use in Khazaria. According to the often-cited passage of Isaiah (ca. 740–700 BC), from the people (of Israel), numerous "as the sand of the sea", only the remnants (a much smaller number) will continue God's work.[28] We cannot know with certainty whether Joseph in his letter to Hasdai ibn Shaprut, one of the most knowledgeable and high-standing Jews during the tenth century, had precisely this meaning in mind. The expression "numerous as the sand of the sea" is used once more by the Khazar ruler, this time regarding the Pechenegs during the tenth century.

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26 One good example are the Burtas, mentioned by Joseph along with the other ethnic groups in the Volga area that paid tribute. This is also confirmed by Eastern sources, according to which the Burtas inhabited a land that was subordinate to the khaganate and who sent mounted troops of around 10 000 men when the need arose (see Zakhoder 1962, 251–252; Novosel'tsev 1990, 120).

27 Beshevliev 1992, 143.

28 Campbell 2005, 233.

In their descriptions of the Khazar state, historians usually highlight the semi-autonomous status of the subjugated regions, to some of which the central authorities sent out their own representatives (tuduns). Also often cited are the accounts from Eastern sources of the ninth and tenth centuries that tell of the Khazar khagan's harem, which consisted of 25 women, all of whom were daughters of rulers of various subjugated to Khazaria regions and states. There is also talk of some sort of "inner Khazaria", ruled directly by the khagan, that was actually his "domain".[29]

This issue also concerns the interpretation of the account of the Byzantine emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus regarding Khazaria's nine "climates". According to A. Novosel'tsev, the "climates" correspond to the administrative-territorial units of Khazaria, which were equivalent to the regions and tributary peoples, named by Joseph, all of whom were governed by tuduns.[30] Firstly, let me point out that these "climates" have no connection to the tribes, named by Joseph, but rather refer to a specific geographical region, probably in the area of the Taman Peninsula, the Crimea and/or the Don Valley (i.e. the western half of Khazaria). These lands are the ones where the Khazar ruler does not name any tributary tribes or peoples, but only urban (settlement) centers. On the other hand, it should always be borne in mind that "many states and peoples were dependent on the khaganate; they were in different environmental conditions and stood at different stages of development: from kingdoms and tribes in the North Caucasus area to the distant Mari on the Viatka, from the Eastern Slavs along the Dnieper to the Alans near Khwarezm. Naturally, the level of subjugation of the vassals varied".[31] It cannot be assumed

29 See for instance Artamonov 1962, 189–191, 272, 382, 406, and 408–409; Dunlop 1967, 109 and 224 (see Ibn Fadlan's text on p. 118); Magomedov 1994, 103; Noonan 2001, 76–77, 81, and 85; Novosel'tsev 1990, 108–109 and 143–144; Pletneva 1976, 22–23, 34, 48, and 57–59; Pletneva 2002, 117, *where "the domain" of the Khazar khagan is with an area of 650 000 sq. km!* Pritsak 1981b, no. 11, 263–265; Romashov 2002–2003, 83 and 86–90; Romashov 2004, 218; Zakhoder 1962, 144–145.

30 Novosel'tsev 1990, 108–109.

31 Romashov 2002–2003, 83. According to Howard-Johnston 2007, 192, "the khaganate had several management strategies to hand. Two, direct rule and investiture of a client-ruler belonging to a detachment of the ruling Khazar stratum of the empire, are revealed by the DAI (*De administrando imperio*, Constantine Porphyrogenitus—*Author's note*) [...] Thus a rather looser form of management is suggested for the Volga Bulgars by... Ibn Fadlan. Other systems, including the appointment of Khazar governors and recognition of local tribal chiefs, may be envisaged for the wide range of sedentary subject peoples. Arrangements are likely to have varied according to the size of a subject people, their level of institutional development and the geographical disposition of their territories".

that all the subjugated territories had a tudun. On the contrary, the accounts regarding Khazar tuduns are extremely few in number and limited in time. There is only one mention of a Khazar tudun in Chersonesus (on the Crimean Peninsula) between the years 705 and 711. Even then the city was part of the Byzantine Empire. Therefore, the position of the tudun signified a representative of the khagan, and not a local governor of a subjugated territory. In the Turkic Khaganates, the tuduns oversaw the administration of the conquered lands, which continued to be governed by their own rulers.[32] S. Pletneva's argument that there was a Bulgarian ruler and a Khazar tudun in Bosporus and Phanagoria[33] cannot be proven.

During the same period (703–704), the governor of Bosporus bore the title of *balgitzi*. Regardless of the various opinions on the matter, it is clear that this was the Khazar governor of the city (region). A similar title, *bolushchi*, is also mentioned in the *Cambridge Document*, regarding the Samkerts governor Pesakh (the mid-tenth century).[34] The governors in question are probably sovereign administrative ones that answered directly to the khagan, with both cities having no other (local) authorities. In Joseph's letter, Bosporus and Samkerts are mentioned in a region, where no ethnic groups or tributary tribes are named.

It is therefore unclear to me why A. Novosel'tsev speaks with certainty about the existence of tuduns not only in the Crimea, but also in Volga Bulgaria.[35] Ibn Fadlan's account, which remains the only source on the status of this Bulgar state that was subjugated to the Khazar Khaganate, does not mention such a title. At this time (the early tenth century), the ruler of the Volga Bulgars Almish bore the title *elteber*. The same title was also borne by the ruler of the Caucasian Huns in Dagestan at the end of the seventh century. Written sources indicate that both rulers were subjects of the Khazar khagan, but enjoyed considerable autonomy in their domestic and, to some extent, foreign policy. In

32 Golden 1980, 215–216; Naumenko 2004b, 97–98. According to Pritsak 1981b, no. 11, 264–265, the Khazar Khaganate used three types of governance over the "city-states", one of which was through a Khazar governor, called a tudun. Baranov 1990, 148–149 rejects in general the existence of a tudun position in Khazaria.

33 Pletneva 1976, 32. The same applies to the view of Tortika 2006a, 143, according to whom the forest-steppe area of the Don Region was controlled by at least three tuduns.

34 It is not clear what this title exactly signifies (given that *balgitzi* and *bolushchi* are the same), since it does not appear anywhere else in the written sources. According to Bozhilov and Dimitrov 1995, 51–52, it was borne by the ruler of the Black Bulgars. Still, the meaning of the title remains unclear—see for instance Golden 1980, 165; Pritsak 1981b, no. 11, 264–265; Novosel'tsev 1990, 144; Naumenko 2004b, 98–99; Tortika 2006a, 255.

35 Novosel'tsev 1990, 108.

the tradition of the steppe empire-khaganates, the *elteber* title was usually given to local rulers who recognized the khagan's authority.[36]

The title of the ruler of Alania is completely different. According to Ibn Rustah (the early tenth century), it was *baghatur*,[37] while Al-Masudi interprets it as k-rk-ndaj.[38] The title *baghatur* is used for the ruler of the Ases (i.e. the Alans) in the Georgian chronicle *Kartlis Tskhovreba*.[39] Constantine Porphyrogenitus calls the Alanian ruler *exousiokrator*.[40] During the reign of the Byzantine emperor and, more precisely, after 932, when according to Al-Masudi the Christians were expelled from the Alanian lands and the Alanian ruler reverted to heathendom, Alania was most probably part of the khaganate.[41] It is obvious that Volga Bulgaria and Alania each had a different standing in the Khazar Khaganate. Perhaps, judging by the title *elteber*, Volga Bulgaria was more closely interconnected with the system of the khaganate than Alania. Such differences in the status of various regions and tribes can be expected for the whole territory of the khaganate, even in areas that are seen as part of the Khazar ruler Joseph's "domain".

A separate and special case is Samandar (the old Khazar capital, preceding Itil), which had its own ruler. In this connection, completely inexplicable is the viewpoint of E. Galkina, according to whom the Eastern sources testified that

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36 Golden 2003, no. 6, 78; Kliashtornyi and Sultanov 2000, 138–139; Fakhrutdinov 1979, 63–71. Pritsak 1981b, no. 11, 263 assumes that the title *elteber* was borne by the rulers of tribute-paying states, subjugated to the khagan. He names seven such states, only two of which have been verified (the state of the Caucasian Huns in Dagestan during the seventh century and Volga Bulgaria during the tenth century). The others are hard to confirm. Two states, defined as independent—Onogur on the lower reaches of the Kama (?) and Volga-Suwar—are actually parts of Volga Bulgaria. In the case of the Magyars and the Burtas, there is no information that could be regarded as proof of the existence of rulers with the title of *elteber*. And the existence of the Akatsirs, moreover as an independent region in Khazaria, seems highly unlikely. According to Pritsak 1981b, no. 11, 265, the tribute-paying tribal communities (which consisted of various Slavic and Finnish tribes) constituted a separate subjugated territory.

37 Minorsky 1963, 220; in this regard, of special interest is the account of Ibn Atham Al-Kufi, according to which in 752–753 the name of the Khazar khagan was Baghatur (Artamonov 1962, 241). Cf. also the title used by M. Kalankatvatsi for the supreme god of the Caucasian Huns Aspandiat—*baghatur* (see on p. 116).

38 Minorsky 1963, 204.

39 Golden 1980, 156.

40 Litavrin and Novosel'tsev 1989, 53.

41 The issue of Alania's status (as well as that of the rest of the mountainous regions of the Caucasus) is examined in more detail in chapter 4.5 and Volga Bulgaria's status is discussed in chapter 3.

after the mid-eight century, Derbent and Samandar ceased to belong (or were no longer subject) to the Khazars. She wrongfully cites Al-Masudi's account of the Jidan Kingdom (Khaidak, the successor of the Hunnic kingdom in Dagestan, which was famous in the seventh century), that supposedly showed its independence from Khazaria. E. Galkina quotes the Khazar ruler Joseph's statement that the entire Cis-Caspian Plain of Dagestan up to Derbent was subjected to him, highlighting the fact that he does not name the any subject tribes or peoples in this area.[42]

Firstly, there is no logic that could combine the accounts about Samandar and Derbent. While Derbent did in fact fall under Khazar rule for a while and was lost by Khazaria after the end of the wars with the Arabs during the first half of the eight century, Samandar was the Khazar capital prior to that. Eastern sources continuously connect this center with Khazaria until the end of the khaganate's existence, and not the other way round, as E. Galkina is trying to portray it. Al-Masudi, whom she cites, explicitly emphasizes that Derbent suffered much damage from the Jidan Kingdom, whose people were part of the lands, subject to the Khazar kings. Its capital was Samandar, which at the time of Al-Masudi was populated by Khazars.[43] There are also accounts that Khazar troops supported the rulers of Derbent (in 916, for instance).[44] The observations of Al-Istakhri and Ibn Hawqal allow for the conclusion that Samandar was the second most important city in Khazaria, governed by its own king (malik), who was related by family ties to the ruler of Itil.[45]

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42 Galkina 2006, 137. Galkina's article is quite notable in its incorrectness. Along with some very interesting observations, it also contains a few unacceptable and biased ones, which are often presented as a final verdict. Thus, for example, following V. Sedov Galkina 2006, 135 identifies the Imenkovo culture as a Slavic one (see for instance Sedov 2001). Lastly on this issue, see Stashenkov 2006; Petrukhin 2006b, 33–34. The ethnic origins of the Imenkovo culture are disputable. It has been identified as Turkic, Mordovian, Finno-Ugric and Baltic (Kazakov 1992, 3–4 and 231–232; Gening and Khalikov 1964, 152–153). It is also not clear to what extent the bearers of the Imenkovo culture influenced the Volga Bulgars (Matveeva and Kochkina 2005, 4–5; Matveeva 2003).

43 See the text in Dunlop 1967, 205.

44 See Minorskii 1963, 66.

45 I will not delve here into the discussions regarding the location of Samandar and the nature of its ties to the Jidan Kingdom (Khaydak), since they do not change the characteristics of this area in Dagestan as a part of the Khazar Khaganate's territory. For more information on this topic, see Artamonov 1962, 399; Fedorov and Fedorov 1978, 174 and 179–216; Golden 1980, 234–237; Magomedov 1994, 159–161; Novosel'tsev 1990, 127 and 144; Romashov 2002–2003, 92–98 and 2004, 194–195.

The Khazar ruler mentions Samandar as a subordinate settlement. He also does not use any ethnic names for the part of Dagestan that is under his rule. As has already been pointed out, on the one hand his letter contains a list of tributary tribes and states, and on the other—regions under his direct rule, whose ethnic identity is not mentioned. This detail is also perceived by E. Galkina, who nonetheless questions the khagan's authority over the larger part of both types of territories.[46]

In fact, E. Galkina is by far not the only historian to dispute Joseph's account of the lands under Khazar rule. It is usually attributed to an earlier period—the mid-ninth century, for instance.[47] As has already been shown, such doubts are not always justified. It is necessary to consider the specifics of the structure, location and the relationships between the various territories and tribes that were under Khazar rule. They indicate different levels of subjugation, at times only formal. Furthermore, Joseph's account reflects the political situation at the time the letter was written. The observation regarding the Khazar ruler's authority over the Pechenegs, whose lands stretched up to those of the Magyars, seems quite exaggerated. It is quite possible that the Pechenegs (although they were divided into eight semi-independent tribes) were allies of Khazaria when the khaganate, again according to Joseph's account, waged war against the Rus'. Khazaria lost this war (which was also against the Byzantine Empire), perhaps because the Pechenegs became allies of the Kievan Prince Sviatoslav (945–972), as can be deduced from accounts of his campaigns against Bulgaria. He, however, met his death in a battle against them on the Dnieper Rapids in the course of the same military conflict. The Khazar Khaganate's relationship with the Pechenegs resembled the one it had with the Magyars a century earlier. The Magyars, who were probably hostile during the first half of the ninth century, subsequently became allies of the khaganate and the first Magyar ruler ascended the throne with the blessing and according to the wishes of the Khazar khagan.[48]

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46 Galkina 2006.

47 See for instance Artamonov 1962, 386–387; Pletneva 1976, 68; Novosel'tsev 1990, 7 and 100; Romashov 2002–2003, 93, where he critisizes the "hyper-critical" attitude towards the information in Joseph's letter regarding Dagestan, as well as Romashov 2004, 218, 222–224, and 243, where he actually rejects Joseph's account and talks about the disintegration of the Khazar World after the Pecheneg invasion at the end of the ninth century. This argument is hard to accept (see chapter 2).

48 Constantine Porphyrogenitus. *De Administrando Imperio*, ch. 38–40, in Litavrin and Novosel'tsev 1989, 159–167. On the Magyars and Pechenegs in Khazaria in particular, see Howard-Johnston 2007, 184–191. Howard-Johnston 2007, 190 deems it possible that

The doubts regarding Joseph's account do not only affect topics that are prone to various interpretations and that have not been of significant importance for "inner Khazaria" or for the territory under direct Khazar rule. A typical example is the question of the Khazar rule in the Crimea. Quite a few scholars (mainly Russian and Ukrainian ones) reject with fiery persistence the idea that a large part of the peninsula (the coastal strip and the mountains, except for the area around Chersonesus and the steppe zone up north) belonged to the Khazar Khaganate not only during the tenth, but also during the ninth or the eight centuries. Also disputed is the Khazar rule over the Taman Peninsula (Samkerts) during the reign of Joseph.[49] At the same time, two Ukrainian archaeologists working in the Crimea, I. Baranov and V. Maiko, believe that the Khazars' biggest dominance in the peninsula occurred in the mid-tenth century, and thus support the information, contained in Joseph's letter.[50] As for Samkerts, there is every reason to believe that it was captured along with Sarkel by Sviatoslav in 965–966;[51] and once more by his son Vladimir (980–1014) between 985 and 988.[52]

The lack of sufficient written records, the still inadequate level of knowledge of the area, as well as the many issues regarding the interpretation of archaeological finds, and the large Khazar territories that have yet to be explored, all hinder the establishment of a clear notion of what Khazaria looked like during the tenth century, or indeed even earlier. The workings of the state indisputably constituted a diverse and multi-layered mechanism, along with the methods of imposing authority and subordination. The use of ready-made models is of no help in the recreation of the khaganate's state structure. Known facts about various conflicts do not prove the secession of a particular region from Khazaria, nor do they indicate the disintegration of the khaganate. This is also true regarding the popular theory about the destructive role of the Pecheneg

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the Khazar rulers "managed the Pecheneg affairs". On Magyar-Khazar relations, see also Artamonov 1962, 343–347; Róna-Tas 2005; Romashov 2002–2003, 154–155.

49 See for instance Naumenko 2004b; Novosel'tsev 1990, 109–110 and 133; Romashov 2002–2003, 143 and 2004, 256; Gertsen 2002; Makarova 2003; Tortika 2006a, 162–164, 197–198, and 254–255. Tortika 2006a, 198 nevertheless believes that the notions regarding "the complete ousting of the Khazars from the Crimea by the end of the ninth century are not quite true". He assumes that the Khazars "either kept some of the Crimean ports in the area of the Strait of Kerch, or, which is more probable, had the opportunity to penetrate the Crimea through the Azov Steppe or the Isthmus of Perekop.

50 Baranov 1990, 54; Maiko 1997, 114 and 2000; Baranov and Maiko 2001; also, see the views of Aibabin 2003.

51 Pletneva 2001, 97–107 and 2003, 172.

52 Gadlo 1990, 22–23; Gumilev 1997, 271.

invasion from the end of the ninth century. It lies at the basis of most views that reject the idea of certain regions belonging to Khazaria. The Khazar ruler Joseph could have had numerous and various in meaning reasons to name a certain tribe or state as a subordinate region. The fact that our knowledge about some of them contradicts his writings does not necessarily mean that we should deny him his right to regard them as subordinate (and neither should we try to impose upon him the view that he was actually describing earlier times). And if his right corresponds to a logic that is incomprehensible to us, we should try to understand it instead of arguing that his account is incorrect.

5.2 Spatial Characteristics

"Every territory occupied for the purpose of being inhabited or utilized as *Lebensraum* is first of all transformed from chaos into cosmos; that is, through the effect of ritual it is given a "form" which makes it become real".[53] Transformed this way, the space is marked by specific characteristics (temples, fortresses, palaces) which convey the idea of a Center not only of the state, but also of the cosmos and order in the whole inhabited territory, since "every temple or palace—and, by extension, every sacred city or royal residence—is a Sacred Mountain, thus becoming a Center".[54]

Due to the lack of researched Khazar palaces, the fortresses and possibly also the temples remain the only tangible monuments that can help in defining the characteristics of the space that belonged to the Khazar people. The khagan's power ensured the prosperity of his subjects, being concentrated in a Center—a vertical axis that connected the ruler with the Divine Grace and the various worlds. Such centers, scattered over great distances and among the various ethnic communities, united the multifaceted nature of Khazaria. They were not only a sign for the subordination of the population, but also a means for spreading the grace which came from the khagan's power—the prevention of disasters and provision of fertility.

In places where Christianity or Islam were spread, but mostly among the elite and often due to political reasons, some attempts can be seen (not everywhere, of course) to change the model of the relations with the central authorities. Two such examples are Alania and Volga Bulgaria. However, many areas in Khazaria were inhabited by quite a few Christians and Muslims who were

53 Eliade 2002, 17–18.

54 Eliade 2002, 19; the erection of fortresses is a lauded virtue of the Bulgarian rulers (see for instance Kaimakamova 2006, 79–80).

loyal to the khagan. The royal guards of the Khazar king (bek) consisted of Muslims—the so-called Larisiyah.

Eastern sources reveal that only khagans had the right to use bricks for building.[55] This is one of the signs which indicate that certain fortresses were built at the will and with the resources of the central Khazar authorities. According to G. Afanas'ev's model, which is based on the efforts necessary to build a fortification, aside from brick fortresses, constructions of hewn stone blocks should also be taken into consideration.[56] In most cases, a common feature of both types of fortifications is their square ground plan, which sometimes took the form of a square in a square (the Semikarakorsk hillfort, for instance), which is important in view of the square's symbolic meaning in the steppe world. Joseph himself describes his country as a square.[57] In this sense, fortifications built with a rampart and a square-formed moat should not be overlooked.

The notion that the horizontal model of the world is shaped like a square is common for the Iranians, Turks and Ugrians. The vertical and horizontal models of the world intersect at a Center. The Khazar population depicted this belief by drawing a square in a square. In architecture, it can be seen in fortresses with an inner city (citadel), as well as in some temples (shrines in Bulgaria, the temple at the Khumar hillfort, the sanctuaries in the Maiaki settlement in Khazaria).[58] Symbolically, the outer square separates order from chaos, or "the civilized state" from "the Barbarians". The sacral power of the separated space grows stronger closer to the center.[59] It is quite impossible to examine here all the fortresses with similar characteristics, found in the Khazar Khaganate. They are scattered over a vast territory (from Dagestan to

55 Dunlop 1967, 92; Golden 1980, 102.

56 I am referring to Afanas'ev's fourth type of stronghold fortifications (Afanas'ev 1993, 134 and 143–148). The difference between the third and fourth type of hillforts is not always clear. In Svistun's opinion, quite a few hillforts of the third type could be regarded as fourth type ones (Svistun 2007).

57 Vlaskin and Il'iukov 1990, 150–152.

58 On the temples, see Vaklinov 1977, 112–114; Ovcharov 1997, 50–58; Stepanov 1999a, 48 and 156–160; Chobanov 2006, 27–35 and 2008, 60–65; Boiadzhiev 2008, 310–338; Bidzhiev 1984, 121–122; Vinnikov and Pletneva 1998, 126–140.

59 Flerova 1994, 107–113. The horizontal model of the world (a square with a marked center and diagonals) is often depicted on various Saltovo monuments in Khazaria (Aksenov 2004c, 208). On steppe traditions, see Stepanov 2005a, 114–117.

the Don), they performed different functions and each probably had a different standing with regard to the central authorities.[60]

Another sign that the establishment and subsequent development of a settlement happened at the will and with the resources of the central authorities (the khagan) are the color symbolics in the settlement's name. Sarkel can be translated as "White City/House/Fortress", and this meaning is preserved it its Russian name, Belaia Vezha (White Tower). One of the interpretations of the name of Samandar is "White House/Palace". The same is true for the city of Al-Bayda, which has yet to be located.[61] Given that the walls of Sarkel, and probably of Samandar as well, were built of bricks (and were thus not white in color), it is completely reasonable to assume that their names highlighted the high status of the settlements and their connection to the central authorities.[62] In the steppe world, white symbolized nobleness, nobility, the elevated class.[63] Such a division is also mentioned in the Eastern sources regarding the Khazars, who were divided into "white" and "black".[64]

Of special interest is Constantine Porphyrogenitus' account of the annually changed garrison in Sarkel, which consisted of 300 men.[65] Archaeological finds indicate (on the basis of found pottery) that it was possibly made up of Pechenegs or Oghuz.[66] Such pottery has also been found in Samkerts, which had a brick wall as well.[67] The presence of this type of pottery in important centers of the Khazar Khaganate, along with their connection to the garrisons that were sent by the central authorities to various settlements, calls for a

60 See Baranov 1990, 54–67 and 152; Flerov 2002; Magomedov 1983, 42–46, 137–145, and 179–180; Mikheev 1985, 5–8, 12, and 19–22; Pletneva 1999, 27–30, 52–54, 82, 86–89, 100–105, 113–115, 140–144, 179–180, 185, and 188–189, Kravchenko 2004.

61 Novosel'tsev 1990, 125, 131; see also Novosel'tsev 1989. On the various meanings of "Samandar", see Romashov 2004, 198.

62 Novosel'tsev 1990, 125; Iordanov 1996b, 57 is of a somewhat different opinion. He believes it to be quite possible that the white color meant "frontier post". The historian justifies his assumption with the definition *belodomtsy* ("inhabitants of white houses"), popular among many peoples and used for the young men who "were employed as border guards". St. Iordanov proposes a similar interpretation for the names of some Bulgar cities (Belgrad in Albania, Bessarabia and along the Danube).

63 See Stepanov 2005a, 117–118.

64 Zakhoder 1962, 137–139.

65 Constantine Porphyrogenitus. *De Administrando Imperio*, ch. 42, in Litavrin and Novosel'tsev 1989, 171.

66 Artamonov 1962, 308–313. Pletneva 1996, 140–141 believes that the Pechenegs or the Oghuz who lived in Sarkel were not employed in garrisons.

67 Pletneva 2000b and 2001.

certain detour from our main subject, in order to highlight the role of the Oghuz in Khazaria. Their presence could indicate the status of an area (settlement) in the khaganate.

Noting that the pottery of both the Pechenegs and the Oghuz were identical during this period, S. Pletneva assumes that in Samkerts they signified the Pecheneg population ("Pechenegs and some Uz"). In her opinion, this population settled there during the tenth century, although coin finds also allow for an earlier dating, namely around the second half of the ninth century. S. Pletneva justifies her theory with the later arrival of the Pechenegs in this area (after 889) and with the assumption that they settled (became sedentary) in Samkerts some time afterwards. According to S. Pletneva, at the same time (the first half of the tenth century) this very population ("Pechenegs and Uz") arrived in Sarkel as well.[68] It is also possible that it was not Pechenegs or Pechenegs and Oghuz (Uz), but Oghuz only. Such a precision is necessary, since by the end of the ninth century the Oghuz were allies of the Khazars against the Pechenegs.[69]

Especially interesting are the archaeological finds made in the last few years near the village of Samosdelka. There, this type of pottery constitutes a significant part of the total amount of found pottery (the rest is Bulgar in origin) for the period from the end of the ninth to the tenth century. E. Zilivinskaia assumes that the Oghuz were the main population of the hillfort near Samosdelka during the tenth century.[70] She notes the fact that the pottery from Samosdelka is identical to that from the late period of the Dzhetyasar culture, from the so-called "marsh hillforts", associated with the Oghuz state with a center on the lower reaches of the Syr Darya (Iangikent), and is also identical to the pottery from the area near Otrar, situated on the middle reaches of the river.[71] Apart from indicating that Khazaria's connections with this region never ceased (which is also supported by accounts from the ninth and tenth centuries regarding the Al-Khazar city on the middle reaches of the river), this pottery is also a sign of the significant presence of Oghuz in the presumed Khazar capital (or its surroundings). We should therefore ask ourselves whether the garrison at the khagan's fortresses (which, undoubtedly, both Samkerts and Sarkel were) was not made up of the Oghuz that inhabited the Khazar capital. S. Pletneva

68 Pletneva 2001, 102–106.

69 Golden 2003, no. 5, 74–77; Pritsak 1981b, no. 10, 10; Artamonov 1962, 349–350.

70 Zilivinskaia, Vasil'ev, and Grechkina 2006; Zilivinskaia 2007, 27.

71 Zilivinskaia, Vasil'ev, and Grechkina 2006, 31; on the Oghuz state and the "marsh hillforts", see Tolstov 1947a; Pritsak 1981b, no. 19, 279–292; Golden 2003, no. 5, 72–80; Levina 1996, 5; Vainberg 1990, 293.

also notes the similarity between the pottery found in Sarkel with that from the late period of the Dzhetyasar culture and the "cities of the Oghuz" along the lower reaches of the Syr Darya.[72] Already in 1958, M. Artamonov presumes that the Khazar garrison there consisted not of Pechenegs, but of Oghuz.[73] Single specimens of such pottery have been found in settlements, located along the upper reaches of the Severski Donets.[74] Besides the Don Region and the Taman Peninsula (Samkerts), such pottery can also be found in centers in Dagestan, associated with the Khazars. During the ninth and tenth centuries, this type of pottery became widespread in Middle Asia as well (in Khwarezm, and especially Kerder, Ferghana and South Kazakhstan). Perhaps the change in the course of the Syr Darya in the early ninth century caused a massive migration of Oghuz southwards and westwards (in the immediate vicinity of Khazaria—on the Ustiurt Plateau and in the Lower Volga Region). It is quite possible that part of this population made up the royal guards in Khazaria, the Larisiyah (al-Arsiyah).[75] Incidentally, similar pottery, dating from the period between the tenth and the eleventh centuries, has also been found in the largest center of Volga Bulgaria, Biliar.[76]

The relations between the Khazar Khaganate and the Oghuz Yabghu State are unclear and at the very least controversial. In the mid-tenth century, Al-Masudi mentions that each winter when the Volga froze over, the Oghuz (whose winter pastures were situated in this area) crossed the river on their

72 Pletneva 1996, 12.

73 Artamonov 1958, 77–78.

74 Liubichev 2004, 290.

75 Zilivinskaia, Vasil'ev, and Grechkina 2006, 31–33; Zilivinskaia and Vasil'ev 2006, 52–53; Vainberg 1990, 257–259 is of a similar point of view, associating the Larisiyah with the population of the Kerder culture along the lower reaches of the Amu Darya (on the territory of Khwarezm), which moved there from the Dzhetyasar region of the Syr Darya. The Larisiyah are regarded as a community, close or akin to the Alans. Al-Masudi observes that they migrated to Khazaria from Khwarezm and constituted the paid guard of the Khazar king (7 000 men) (Zakhoder 1962, 155–157). This observation is usually supplemented by Al-Biruni's account of the Ases. He writes that the Ases lived somewhere along the lower reaches of the Amu Darya (possibly in the area of the Kerder culture) and migrated to the territory of the khaganate (and more precisely, to the coast of the Khazar (Caspian) Sea) when the river changed its course. According to Al-Biruni, the language of the Ases was a mixture of Khwarezmian (i.e. Eastern Iranian) and Pecheneg (most probably Turkic) (Artamonov 1962, 407; Bubenok and Radivilov 2004, 12; Gabuev 2000, 59). According to Bubenok and Radivilov 2004, 17, the account of the Khazar Larisiyah indicates not only a commercial, but also a military cooperation between Khazaria and Khwarezm during the ninth and tenth centuries.

76 Khalikov 1976, 45.

horses and entered the lands of the Khazars. When the local Khazar troops failed to stop the Oghuz, the Khazar king himself came out against them and did not let them enter Khazaria. The Eastern writer emphasizes that the Oghuz could not cross the river in summer.[77] The possibility that the Oghuz could fight with the Khazars, being their neighbors, is also mentioned by Constantine Porphyrogenitus.[78] Ibn Fadlan's account reveals that the ruler of the Volga Bulgars, Almish, was the son-in-law of the Oghuz army commander, Etrek. Meanwhile, the Khazars held a number of hostages, whom the Oghuz wanted to exchange for the Arab envoys. The main concern of the Oghuz (expressed by the noblest and most honorable among them, Tarkhan) was that the envoys of the Arab Caliphate could be plotting to provoke a war between the Oghuz and the Khazars.[79]

According to one legend, the father of Seljuk, Duqaq (Tuqaq), was in the service of the Khazar ruler, who bore the title of *yabghu*. After Duqaq's death, when Seljuk came of age, he was elevated in the Khazar court as a military commander. The Khazar ruler's wife (khatun) did not like Seljuk and managed to set her husband against him. Fearing for his life, Seljuk fled, taking with him 100 horsemen, 1500 camels and 50 000 sheep. The names of Seljuk's sons are especially interesting: Israel, Michael, Yunus and Musa.[80] The story of how Duqaq and Seljuk served the Khazar ruler cannot be accepted as accurate due to the title of *yabghu*. Since this was the title of the supreme ruler of the Oghuz, it is widely acknowledged that they had probably been in his service.[81] It should, however, be borne in mind that the legend in question was popular in Middle Asia where the *yabghu* title was widespread and meant "supreme ruler". Adding the fact that this was also the title of the Oghuz ruler, it is hardly surprising that the Khazar ruler was presented with the title of *yabghu*. The title itself is therefore is not a valid reason to reject the story, especially given that the Oghuz probably served in garrisons at various Khazar fortresses during the tenth century. The high position of Duqaq in the Khazar court, along

77 Dunlop 1967, 209–210; on the ways in which nomads crossed rivers during various seasons, see Tortika 1999.

78 Constantine Porphyrogenitus. *De Administrando Imperio*, ch. 10, in Litavrin and Novosel'tsev 1989, 51.

79 Ibn Fadlan. *Puteshestvie do Volzhska Bulgariia*, in Naumov 1992, 32–33; Kovalevskii 1956, 26 and 129.

80 Dunlop 1967, 258–261; Artamonov 1962, 419–420.

81 Dunlop 1967, 259; Artamonov 1962, 420; Vainberg 1990, 288–289 assumes that the legend does not refer to the Khazar Khaganate, but to the ruler of the Al-Khazar city, located on the middle reaches of the Syr Darya.

with the fact that he was succeeded by his son Seljuk, likens his role to that of the beks in Khazaria, which was well documented in Eastern sources.

Historians generally regard the names of Seljuk's sons as evidence of the Khazar influence in the Oghuz state, but do not necessarily associate it with the service of Oghuz men at the Khazar court.[82] Thus, "inhabitants of the Empire of the Yabghu were under the cultural influence of the Khazar Empire".[83] Of special significance is the preserved notion regarding the close relations between the Oghuz and the Khazars. These relations were the result of the constant contacts between the population around the Volga and the Caspian Sea, as well as Middle Asia during the times of the Khazar Khaganate. Accounts about military conflicts between the Oghuz and the Khazars, which are often cited, do not deny the existence of a cultural exchange between the inhabitants of the areas along the lower reaches of the Volga and the Syr Darya Rivers, all of whom belonged to a common geographical and cultural region.

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The construction of fortresses in Khazaria was dictated by state policy and was en expression of its ideology. Therefore, the nationality of the workers who built the various fortresses was of no significance. Attempts to attribute all the constructed structures in Khazaria to Byzantine builders do not clarify their origins or traditions. Such a perspective artificially shifts the cultural centers that were of importance for Khazaria (such as the Caucasus and Middle Asia), thus distorting the image of the Khazar Khaganate itself. This problem greatly resembles existing scientific disputes on the traditions of fortress and palace construction in Danube Bulgaria.[84]

On the basis of Constantine Porphyrogenitus' account of the Byzantine participation in the construction of Sarkel, G. Afanas'ev assumes that all Khazar fortresses of the fourth type (both along the Don and in the Caucasus) are built by Byzantine workers. He regards as additional evidence the use of brick and stone in the constructions, as well as the square ground-plan of the fortresses. Thus, the overall appearance of the fortress construction in Khazaria is associated with the Late Antiquity and Early Byzantine traditions.[85] However, the

82 Dunlop 1967, 260–261; Artamonov 1962, 420.

83 Pritsak 1981b, no. 19, 282.

84 See Filov 1993 (originally 1924); Mavrodinov 1959; Vaklinov 1977; Chobanov 2006 and 2008; Rashev 2008; Boiadzhiev 2008.

85 Afanas'ev 1993, 134–140 and 2001, 47–51; this theory is absent from the earlier works of G. Afanas'ev. For instance, in 1984 he simply names various European and Middle Asian

antique tradition does not refer only to Byzantium or Rome, but also to the Caucasus and Persia, including Middle Asia.[86]

Brick construction is not reason enough to suspect a direct influence from Byzantium. The bricks used in the construction of Sarkel differ in size from the Byzantine ones, but are similar to those from the Caucasus and Middle Asia.[87] The theory, according to which Sarkel and all the other fortresses were erected by Byzantine builders, is rejected by M. Artamonov[88] and V. Flerov.[89] According to V. Flerov, Semikarakorsk and Sarkel harbor both southern (Transcaucasian)

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parallels of the fortress construction in Khazaria, without actually associating them with the Byzantine tradition (Afanas'ev 1984b, 46–48 and 54).

86 On the building traditions of Middle Asia, see Belenitskii, Bentovich, and Bol'shakov 1973.

87 The main dimensions of the bricks in Sarkel are 25×25 and 27×27 cm, although there are also larger ones—30×30 and 34×34 cm (Artamonov 1958, 28; Pletneva 1996, 16). The bricks from the Semikarakorsk hillfort are similar in size—25×25 and 26×26 cm (Flerov 2001, 61 and 2002, 157). The same brick sizes can be found in several centers in Volga Bulgaria (25–27×25–27 cm in Biliar, Suwar, the Khulash hillfort and the Murom Township), with the bricks in Suwar also reaching 30–31 cm. During the ninth and tenth centuries, the bricks typical for Middle Asia ranged from 29x29 cm to 25–29 cm (the same 29 cm ones can be found in the Murom Township), in contrast to earlier traditions which dictated larger bricks with sides that reached 50–55 cm. In the Caucasus, the common brick size was 26–27 cm. (Davlenshin 1990, 41; Matveeva and Kochkina 2005, 26 and 30). Bricks, used in the Tsimliansk hillfort, ranged from 40x20x10 cm to 37×38×8, etc. (Flerov 2002, 160). The same bricks can be found in Samkerts—40×20×6–7 cm, as well as in various fortresses in Dagestan: the Sigitma, Shelkovsk, Nekrasovka and other hillforts, where brick size was generally 40×20×10 cm (Pletneva 2000b and 2003, 172). Bricks ranging in size from 40×20×10 cm to 43×23×10 cm can also be found among the Uyghur hillforts of Middle Asia (Kyzlasov 1959, 69). In Samosdelka, the bricks are not only 20×21 and 26×27 cm in size, but also 39–40×8–9 cm (Zilivinskaia, Vasil'ev, and Grechkina 2006, 29). Similar sizes, 40×40×9 cm, as well as bricks with sides of 28×28 to 33x33 cm, can be found in the "marsh hillforts" along the lower reaches of the Syr Darya River, associated with the Oghuz (Tolstov 1947a, 60–62). The size 40x40x10 cm is also typical for ancient Khwarezm (Tolstov 1948b, 91 and 119; Vainberg 1990, 133). Flerov 2002, 158 sees a close likeness to the brick construction of Sarkel and Semikarakorsk in the Oren-Kala hillfort in Azerbaijan, which had a square ground-plan and where many of the used bricks were 24 cm and 28 cm in size.

88 Artamonov 1958, 25–26 and 1962, 301–302.

89 Flerov 1991, 166–168 and 2001, 68. Of special interest is the research of Chobanov 2008, 152–153 and 164. He assumes that the construction of the walls of Pliska, Preslav and Sarkel was done with the help of the Iranian measurement system. This indicates that "Sarkel, as well as the Lower Danube cities were built by the same workers or in the very least by workers that worked within a common building tradition". Thus, the proximity of the Saltovo culture to the culture of pagan Bulgaria indicates "a common building tradition, shared by Bulgars and Khazars, which was based on Caucasian practices from the

and Byzantine-Crimean building traditions; in his opinion it is also possible that fortress construction with bricks first came to the Don Region from Itil.[90] S. Pletneva believes that the building tradition of Sarkel and Semikarakorsk stems from the Caucasus, particularly from Dagestan and Caucasian Albania. She presumes that it was through Albania that the building practices, typical for Sassanid Iran and reflected in the construction of Sarkel, entered Khazaria.[91]

Wall construction using panzer technique was widespread in the Caucasus, the Northern Black Sea region, the Middle East and Middle Asia between the fourth and the seventh centuries. In Dagestan, it was used from the late fourth or fifth century, during the Albano-Sarmatian period (i.e. after the influx of Sarmatian (Late-Sarmatian) population there). In the lands of the Alans in the North Caucasus stone fortifications built with this technique were erected en masse at the end of the sixth and during the seventh century (prior to that, large-area earthen fortifications were used). During the ninth and the tenth centuries, some fortresses (such as Gornoe Ekho) entered a new building period, which is associated with the influx of Bulgar population that fulfilled the function of a local garrison. It is during this period that the Khumar hill-fort was built, and also inhabited by Bulgars. The arrival of Bulgars and the erection or restoration of fortresses is an expression of the khaganate's policy. The spread of Byzantium's influence and building traditions (the presence of Byzantine construction workers) in Alania refers to the time after Khazaria's defeat in the 960s and is typical for the period between the tenth and the thirteenth centuries.[92]

During the Khazar period, the old fortresses in Dagestan were reconstructed and new ones were built. That was also the time when a new building technique was introduced in this region—alternating layers of rammed clay (pisé) with brick layers. This technique is used in Transcaucasia (it has also been found in the lower layers of Derbent), but is typical for Middle Asia, where it is widespread.

The walls of Afrasiab (Samarkand) are also built with this technique, as well as those of Panjakent and Varakhsha, whose bricks are similar in size to the ones used in the Terek-Sulak Interfluve.

Sassanid era [...] the workers that erected the various monuments (the ones in Danube Bulgaria and those in the Khazar Khaganate) adhered to a common building tradition".

90 Flerov 2002, 168.

91 Pletneva 1967, 44; Pletneva 1976, 50–51; Pletneva 1996, 20; Pletneva 1999, 53–54 and 86–89.

92 Magomedov 1983, 137–138; Gadzhiev 2002, 29 and 152–153; Arzhantseva 2007a, 75–76 and 2007b, 61–63; Bidzhiev 1984; Afanas'ev 1993, 139–140.

In Dagestan, such are the walls from the third (Khazar) building period of the Verkhnii Chiriurt hillfort, the fortress near Teng-Kala, as well as the Sigitma, Nekrasovka and Shelkovsk hillforts.[93] The square form of the last three hillforts prompted G. Afanas'ev to associate them (along with the Khumarinsk fort and other fortresses of the fourth type) with the Byzantine (Antique) building tradition.[94]

Without denying a possible influence from Byzantium, M. Magomedov presumes that the erection of fortresses with a symmetric plan in Dagestan is due to the building traditions of Middle Asia where such fortresses existed already during the time of the Parthians.[95] The historian believes that "the fortification of ancient Khazaria is related to Middle Asian traditions not only in general techniques, but also in the various construction details. The exponents of these traditions were, obviously, the Khazars themselves, being closely connected to the ethnocultural world of Middle Asia".[96]

The building traditions of Volga Bulgaria (for example, in Biliar or the Murom Township) are also linked to Middle Asia, Iran and the Middle East.[97] The fortresses of the Oghuz along the lower reaches of the Syr Darya ("the marsh hillforts") had a square ground-plan as well and were built with alternating layers of bricks and rammed clay.[98] Square in shape fortifications, built with ramparts and moats, are representative of the traditions of the steppe peoples. Such, for example, is the Ivolga hillfort of the Huns.[99]

Of special interest is a row of 12 square hillforts, fortified with ramparts and moats (with bricks as one of the building materials) that the Uyghurs erected in Tuva (in the eighth century). Almost all of them are connected by a wall with a moat 230 km long.[100] They are reminiscent of Bulgarian fortifications, built of ramparts and moats and situated in a row. For example, the Great Earthen Vallum, which stretches for 54 km and along which are situated

93 Magomedov 1938, 140; Magomedov 1994, 113; Magomedov 2005, 77–78. The alternation of rammed clay and brick layers is also typical for the Dzhetyasar culture (Vainberg 1990, 183; Levina 1996, 18).

94 Afanas'ev 1993, 138–140.

95 Magomedov 1983, 142; Magomedov 1994, 114; Magomedov 2005, 79.

96 Magomedov 1983, 143.

97 Davletshin 1990, 39; Matveeva and Kochkina 2005, 30.

98 Tolstov 1947a, 58–65.

99 Kradin 2001a, 81; Kliashtornyi and Sultanov 2000, 61; Kyzlasov 1998, 53; more than ten square Hunnic hillforts are known, all fortified with walls of rammed clay and ramparts and moats. The "Derestui castle" consisted of square outer walls that encompassed a square citadel (Kyzlasov 1998, 49–57).

100 Kyzlasov 1959, 66–73; Stepanov 2005a, 28.

35 large and 28 smaller earthen fortifications (the largest Bulgarian vallum is located in today's Romania and is 300 km long). Earthen fortifications can also be found along the main traffic route of Danube Bulgaria in the north-south direction. They served as camps for military garrisons and were built at the will and with the resources of the state authorities. This tradition was abandoned in Bulgaria in the ninth century. At that time fortresses of rough stone and irregular shape began to appear, built with the funds and on the initiative of the local population.[101]

In the Khazar Khaganate, earthen fortifications were built in Dagestan, in the steppe zone of the North Caucasus and in the areas of the steppe zone in the Don Region that were inhabited by Bulgars. The Alans also erected fortifications with ramparts and moats in the plain area of the North Caucasus.[102] One of the prominent examples in the area of the Terek-Sulak Interfluve is the Andrei-Aul hillfort, which had an oval form. The steppe zone of Dagestan contains many fortresses with an oval or rectangular shape, fortified with bricks or ramparts and moats.[103] Square earthen fortifications can also be found near Sarkel and the Tsimliansk hillfort (as well as the Kamyshin hillfort, excavated quiet recently, during the 1990s, and probably built from hewn stone blocks), and in the vicinity of the Semikarakorsk hillfort. These fortifications remained inhabited even after the hillfort's abandonment, which occurred in the early tenth century, at the very latest.[104]

Quite interesting is also a group of eight fortifications, six of which lined in a row, all situated along the middle reaches of the Severski Donets, in the area, inhabited by Bulgars. The most prominent ones among them (such as the Maiaki-Tsarino and the Sidorovo fortifications on the right bank of the river and the Kirovsk and Novoselovka ones—on the left one) are fortified with a rampart and a moat. The distance between the hillforts is not more than 4–6 km.[105] Large in size fortifications, built with a rampart and a moat, can also be found in Volga Bulgaria; such is for example the Murom Township.[106]

If we leave out the row of fortresses along the upper reaches of the Severski Donets, which are situated in the Alan-populated zone at a distance of 20 km

101 Rashev 1982; Rashev 2006, 301–310; Rashev 2008, 140–142; Stanilov 1984, 100–105; Evstatiev 2007; Rabovianov 2007.

102 Kovalevskaia 1981a, 83 and 1984, 146.

103 Magomedov 1983, 143–145 and 179.

104 Liapushkin 1958b, 264; Pletneva 1996, 143; Pletneva 1999, 100–109 and 115; Flerov 2002 and 1996b, 9.

105 Mikheev 1985, 12–22; Kravchenko 2004 and 2007.

106 Matveeva and Kochkina 2005, 16–18.

from each another and built from rough stone in irregular shapes, quite noteworthy is the row of fortresses along the Tikhaia Sosna River, some of which are made from hewn stone blocks (two of them, the Maiaki and the Verkhnii Ol'shansk hillforts) or from bricks (four in number: the hillforts at Alekseevka, Muhoderovka, Koltunovka and near the Krasnoe Village), all of them located 15 km apart. All of them are of the fourth type, according to G. Afanas'ev's classification, and are therefore built at the orders and with the funds of the Khazar Khaganate.[107]

The research of a significant part of the architectural practices in the Khazar Khaganate indicates that the issue of the cultural influence cannot be resolved unilaterally. The influence of Byzantium was, undoubtedly, present in the khaganate (and especially in the Crimea), but most of the building monuments in Khazaria point towards the traditions of Middle Asia and the Caucasus. These traditions can be traced not only in the architecture, but also in the ideology and are reflected in the state and folk arts (regardless of the ethnicity of the monuments).[108] As for the arts, the ties between Middle Asia and Dagestan during the Khazar period were exceptionally strong.[109] They can be traced among the various ethnic groups inhabiting the Khazar Khaganate. The art of Khazaria has its own specifics, both on a folk and on an official level, but it has its roots in the same centers, associated with the legacy of Sassanid Iran and with the traditions of Middle Asia. This is a vast region, relatively homogenous in a cultural and ideological sense, whose western parts in the ninth and tenth centuries bordered the Magyar state in Central Europe and Danube Bulgaria. This is why the examples commonly given of the Byzantine influence in Danube Bulgaria or in Khazaria stem from Asia Minor or the Middle East—territories that are, to a higher or lower extent, also part of the culture of the East (Iran, the Caucasus or Middle Asia).[110]

With regard to the legacy of the Sassanids, it should be noted that their culture was developed in Middle Asia by at least several ruling dynasties: the Samanids, whose center was in Bukhara (874/5–999), the Tahirids in Khorasan (820/1–872/3) and the Saffarid dynasty in Sistan (867–903 or 873–900).[111]

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107 Afanas'ev 1993, 134 and 143–148; Pletneva 1999, 52–54.

108 See also Vaklinova 2003.

109 Magomedov 1994, 155–156.

110 On the ties between the art of Khazaria and that of Middle Asia or Iran, see Pletneva 1999, 155–156; Zilivinskaia 2007, 29–31; Foniakova 1986, 2002, and 2007; Baranov 1989, 169–170; on the Byzantine parallels of the Bulgarian monuments, see Rashev 2008, 79–81, 86–90, 125, 127–128, 216–217, and 337–338.

111 Minaeva 2003a, 160.

Cultural relations between Middle Asia and Eastern Europe did not cease during the Early Middle Ages. Therefore, Khazaria or Danube Bulgaria should not be envisioned as closed communities. Not incidentally, the art of the Magyars during that time was influenced by the so-called "post-Sassanidic style".[112] The art of Khazaria or of Danube Bulgaria reveals not so much the ethnicity of its creators as the influence of the cultural centers, situated nearby or directly in the lands from which the Bulgars and Khazars, as well as the Alans came to Europe. Such is also the culture of the Eurasian Steppe during this period.[113]

It is extremely hard to define the boundaries of cultural influences in the steppes. The cultural centers of Middle Asia and Iran have always been closely linked to the steppe world. It should also be borne in mind that "until the eight and ninth centuries, Middle Asia (its northern and western parts, at the very least), along with a significant part of Eastern Europe, were only parts of a vast historio-ethnographic region that developed the traditions of the ancient Scytho-Sarmatian culture, saturated by an Eastern Hellenistic influence".[114] The roads that connected Khazaria to Middle Asia and Iran were filled not only with merchants, but also with people who shared common ideas (both religious and artistic) and who found acceptance and understanding among the Bulgars, Khazars and the Alans. Khazaria developed its own specific art, the roots of which were, however, inseparable from Iran or Middle Asia. According to V. Flerova, "the role of the Middle Asian arts and crafts in the creation of the nomadic cultures' distinctive nature is often underestimated. Historians mainly point to Byzantium and Iran, ignoring such factors as the export of goods from Middle Asian cities, the movement of the craftsmen themselves, their employment in the camps of the khagans and the adaptation of common Sogdian models done by nomads of different tribal formations".[115]

In the chapter on Khazaria's economy I mentioned the economic functions of the system that Iu. Kobishchanov calls *poliudie*, in accordance with the term that the Byzantine emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus used for the practice of the Rus' princes from the mid-tenth century.[116] This widespread system was used from the most remote times by steppe tribes (the Scythians and the Turks). It is also typical for Georgia and Dagestan. Inherent mainly to entities such as the early state, the *poliudie* created relations between remote parts of the state, as well as between various regions and the central authorities. One of

112 Foniakova 1986, 37.

113 See also Minaeva 1991 and 2003a, 167.

114 Tolstov 1946, 108.

115 Flerova 2007, 22.

116 See in chapter 4.5.

its essential features is the existence of a sacralized royal authority. During his rounds the ruler collected taxes, calmed uprisings, exercised his direct judicial powers, but also ensured fertility and order. His visits gave each region a place in the universal order (cosmos), which was also seen as the order of the state. This way, the regions received the grace that exuded from the ruler's person.[117]

The ruler was accompanied on his rounds of the land by merchants, and probably also by craftsmen, which helped in spreading various art objects, as well as creating a common taste and style in the state. In the Caucasus, the *poliudie* connected trade and craft urban centers with the agricultural valleys, as well as nomadic tribes with mountain communities This explains its longevity in Georgia and Dagestan.[118]

The *poliudie* united the Khazar Khaganate with the mountain communities and state entities in the Caucasus. One of its typical features was the existence of more than one state center. The rulers of Sarir had at least three, with different ideological functions. "In the Kaitag region were located the golden throne, golden chalice and the other regalia of this dynasty, the treasury was in Kumukh (the land of the Laks), and the winter residence of the king was situated in Khunzah, in the land of the Avars. Especially significant was the religious center Dibgashi".[119] The rulers of the Kaitag Utsmiyat, the heyday of which occurred between the eleventh and the fifteenth centuries, had three residences. Of special interest are also some similarities between the structure of the Utsmiyat and that of Khazaria. The Utsmiyat consisted of semi-autonomous domains, governed by beks. The authority of the utsmii was weak and sacralized. The taxes were collected by his deputy, the gattin, who was escorted by 300 warriors. With the *poliudie*, he visited the largest *auls* that belonged to the utsmii.[120]

The *poliudie* system was also used in Middle Asia. In the tenth century, the Samanid dynasty spend the winters in the capital Bukhara and the rest of the year the rulers devoted to traveling through their lands together with their troops and harem. This practice was preserved and became typical for

117 Kobishchanov 1995, 3–4, 29–31 (on Khazaria in particular, see 219–223), 227, 238, 241, 245–247, 253, and 264–265; The possibility of a system similar to the *poliudie* existing in Khazaria is accepted by Pletneva 2002, 117, and by Flerov 2007, 66 and by Stepanov 2002b, 29.

118 Kobishchanov 1995, 234.

119 Kobishchanov 1995, 193.

120 Kobishchanov 1995, 197–198.

the Emirate of Bukhara during the Late Middle Ages and in later times as well.[121] Such a practice could well have existed also in Danube Bulgaria.[122]

The possibility of a system like the *poliudie* existing in Khazaria could give answers to many questions regarding the unity of the khaganate's community, which consisted of various ethnic groups and which populated areas with different economies. The Khazar Khaganate (its "inner" territory) could be seen in the form of a square, surrounded by fortresses built by the state authorities. Various settlements, such as Sarkel or Samkerts, had the rank of royal residences. It is therefore probably no coincidence that their garrisons were made up of Oghuz. The annual rounds of the Khazar ruler united the various regions of the state. Thus, in practice, but also in view of the sacral person of the khagan, these rounds ensured the prosperity and peace of the whole land.

5.3 The Bulgars, Alans and Khazars of Khazaria

The available information on the ethnic groups in the Khazar Khaganate refers mainly to the relations and connections between the Bulgars and the Alans. They differ mostly in their burial rites. Up till now, there has not been a rite that scholars could unanimously identify with the Khazars. Perhaps closest to defining the burial rites of the Khazars (or the Khazar nobility) is M. Magomedov. He opposes the assertion that all catacomb burials in the North Caucasus (and in Eastern Europe as well) belong to the Alans and identifies a specific Khazar type that originated from the catacomb burials in Middle Asia.[123] It is interesting to note that burials similar to the Khazar catacomb ones were conducted in the Sulak Valley (in Dagestan) from as early as the fourth-fifth centuries. At that time, catacomb, pit and mound necropoles, distinguished by specific features, began to appear in the area of contact between the local population and the nomad newcomers in the various regions of the North Caucasus.[124] Ia. Fedorov and G. Fedorov assume that these earlier catacombs in Dagestan belonged to

121 Kobishchanov 1995, 190.

122 Stanilov 1984 105; Stepanov 2002b, 29; also cf. the view of Kradin 2001a, 212–214 that the governance system of the Hunnu Empire corresponded to the annual cycle of Nature. From time to time, special rites and rituals were performed to ensure the balance and stability between the world of the humans and that of the gods. Major feast days such as the winter and spring ones and the welcoming of the new year were celebrated in various centers.

123 Magomedov 1994, 33–34 and 91–97.

124 Abramova, Krasil'nikov, and Piatykh 2004, 61–62.

the Maskuts (the Massageteans, a Sarmatian tribe that originated from Middle Asia) who had their own state there before the Hunnic invasion in the fourth century.[125] The scholars believe that the later catacomb burials in the Verkhnii Churiurt necropolis are Khazar ones.[126]

A group of mound burials, widely distributed between the Don and the Volga and surrounded by a square (sometimes circular) moat, are also believed to be Khazar. This burial rite is not isolated from the burial practices typical for the Northern Black Sea region and the Volga-Don Interfluve in previous centuries (from the fifth to the seventh century). A. Komar and E. Kruglov identify as Khazar the monuments from the Sivashovka group, as well as the monuments of the Pereshchepina type. The lack of written records about Khazars in the Northern Black Sea region between the fifth and seventh centuries does not bother the two historians, who easily deny the authenticity of records referring to Bulgars (including those that speak of Great Bulgaria).[127]

A. Komar and E. Kruglov's theory is not new. Already in the 1980s, A. Ambroz and A. Aibabin identified as Khazar monuments that belonged to the Sivashovka group and the Pereshchepina type (Voznesenka). They associated these monuments with Turkic traditions, especially Voznesenka with the Turkic memorial temples.[128] Extremely interesting is V. Flerova's viewpoint: she rejects the Turkic origin of the moat burials and identifies them as a

125 Fedorov and Fedorov 1978, 36–41; see also Novosel'tsev 1990, 91–92. An Armenian essay from the fifth century which refers to events from the fourth century describes the ruler of the Maskuts as "the master of the numerous armies of the Huns". It is completely possible that this account reflects the relations that existed between Dagestan and Middle Asia during the third and fourth centuries. The earliest undisputable date for the presence of Huns in the North Caucasus region is 395 AD (see Artamonov 1962, 51–53).

126 Fedorov and Fedorov 1978, 101. Pletneva 1976, 28 also distinguishes a Khazar burial rite in the Verkhnii Chiriurt necropolis. According to her, the neighboring hillfort was inhabited by Khazars, Bulgars and Alans.

127 Komar 1999 and 2000; Kruglov 2002 and 2005. For more details on the Sivashovka and the Pereshchepina group type monuments, as well as critisism on the theory of A. Komar and E. Kruglov, see: Rashev 2007a, 70–136. See also Rashev 1998; Stanilov 2003a; Pletneva 1999, 121–126, 169–176, and 200–204; Bogachev 2007; Flerova 2001b and 2002; Prikhodniuk 2002; Naumenko 2004a; Tortika 2006a, 71–93; on the ethnic interpretations of the Sivashovka and the Pereshchepina group type monuments, see also chapter 4.2.

128 Ambroz 1982; Aibabin 1985 and 1991; such a link is also accepted by Artamonov 1962, 175 (where it is emphasized that these finds do not contain anything specifically Bulgar or Khazar) and Pletneva 1997, 47, as well as Pletneva 1999, 173–174 (where she states that "we have yet to find a memorial temple on the main territory of the Khazar Khaganate", and that "the lack of new data does not permit us for the time being to associate with absolute confidence the "memorial" temples specifically with the Khazars"). See the criticism

Sarmatian heritage (they are found both during the Middle Sarmatian period and in the Late Sarmatian one). She also includes Voznesenka among them. This burial tradition, widespread in Eastern Europe and in Middle Asia, does not have a direct connection to the Turkic memorial temples. It can be traced in various types of burials that were typical for the European steppe between the fifth and the seventh centuries.[129] Presently, it is quite possible that the moat burials could turn out to be Bulgar.[130] Ultimately, scientists have not yet found a necropolis or a burial type that could be identified as Khazar with any certainty. The lack of sufficient knowledge about regions, presumably inhabited by Khazars, along with the possibility that the Khazars remained nomads (and therefore did not have sedentary settlements and necropoles) both hinder the discovery of undisputedly Khazar monuments. It is presumed that the main pastures of the Khazars were in the Kalmyk Steppe, where burial mounds surrounded by moats have been found. S. Pletneva does not rule out the possibility that Khazar settlements may also be unearthed there.[131]

In his examination of the burials with square moats G. Afanas'ev for no apparent reason states that they do not have a parallel in preceding traditions, with the exception of the Sarmatian monuments. He associates the Bulgar burial (pit) rite with the Alans (who were descendants of the Sarmatians) and highlights its existence from ancient times. According to the historian, it thus "becomes clear" that the Bulgars, whom he calls "Pseudo-Bulgars", differed anthropologically from the Turkic population of the Trans-Ural Region.[132] However, the anthropological proximity of the Bulgars to the late Sarmatians was clarified already in the 1950s, when the necropolis near Novi Pazar in

made by Stanilov 2003a, 48–50 and 2006, 182–184; Rashev 2007a, 105–110; Baranov 1990, 113–115.

129 Flerova 2001b. In Tortika's opinion, it is possible that Voznesenka could have been a memorial complex, left by a Khazar border unit (Tortika 2006a, 85). He also acknowledges its relation to the cremation burials in some Saltovian necropoles. According to Tortika 2006a, 104–105, the ones buried there are local noblemen, whose ancestors "played a major role in the steppe regions of Southeast Europe during pre-Saltovian times". Or they could also be Bulgar noblemen.

130 Pletneva 2005, 23. There is also a theory which associates this type of burial monuments with the Pechenegs. See Armarchuk 2000, 108–109.

131 Pletneva 1999, 203–205; the lack of undisputable Khazar monuments could also mean that the Khazars were concentrated in the main urban centers (which is quite probable in view of the "Khazar" burial rite in the Verkhnii Chiriurt necropolis) (see also Pletneva 1982, 51 and 99).

132 Afanas'ev 2001.

Bulgaria was unearthed.[133] The burial rite is among the main reasons for the Bulgars to be associated with the late Sarmatians.[134] The conclusions of G. Afanas'ev have been further developed by O. Bubenok.[135] It is quite impossible here to examine every one of the arguments that the two historians bring forth, but most of them are based on unacceptable and improvable statements.

Thus, according to G. Afanas'ev, the fact that cauldrons with inner ears were also specific of the Alans is reason enough to reject the presence of the Bulgars in Eastern Europe.[136] But the inner ear cauldrons are not a significant feature, much less a major sign of Bulgar ethnicity. Usually, this is judged on the basis of the burial rite, considered in its entirety. In O. Bubenok's opinion, the ritual destruction of the skeletons of the dead is typical only for the Alans.[137] This ritual, however, can be found among all Bulgar communities, including those in Danube Bulgaria.[138] The same thing is true for the "Hocker" type of burials. O. Bubenok regards the dolichocrania found in some pit necropoles in the Don Region as an argument in favor of their Alanian ethnicity (since the main anthropological type that most scientists ascribe to the Bulgars is the brachycephalic one).[139] This indicator is also not decisive for the ethnicity of the buried.[140] Dolichocrania and mesocrania have also been found in Danube Bulgaria.[141] Broadly speaking, following the logic of G. Afanas'ev and O. Bubenok it seems that Danube Bulgaria and Volga Bulgaria were created by Alans who, for some unknown reason, named their states Bulgaria.

L. Gumilev's approach to the ethnic interpretation of the monuments is also unacceptable. Although he traces many similarities among the Bulgars and the Khazars, L. Gumilev argues that the Bulgars were nomads that populated the steppes, while the Khazars were farmers who inhabited the river valleys. Thus, he places a sign of equality between economy and ethnos and defines the ethnic boundary as dependent on the geographical (landscape) features

133 Stanchev and Ivanov 1958.

134 See in chapter 1.1.

135 Bubenok 1997.

136 Afanas'ev 2001, 46. G. Afanas'ev has other unacceptable theories as well. For instance, he identifies the Alans from the forest-steppe zone with the Burtas (see Afanas'ev 1984a, 37–40); a similar point of view is also shared by Bubenok 1997, 71–77 and 150–151. See the criticism by Tortika 2004 and 2006a, 302–346; Romashov 2002–2003, 177–178; Flerov 1993, 38.

137 Bubenok 1997, 65.

138 Flerov 1989 and 1993, 53–60; Aksenov 2002, 12.

139 Bubenok 1997, 65.

140 See for instance Rashev 2003a, 29.

141 See for instance Iordanov 2008, 106.

of a region.[142] This way, L. Gumilev rejects the probability of a cohabitation between Bulgars and Khazars in various regions of the khaganate (in the Terek Valley, for example, or along the lower reaches of the Volga), as well as the possibility of the existence of Khazar nomads and consequently Bulgar farmers. His standpoint contradicts the reports on Bulgar agricultural communities in the river valleys of the Khazar Khaganate (incidentally, in his research the Bulgars seem to "disappear" from this territory after the defeat of Great Bulgaria in the seventh century). This is why he opposes the theory of M. Artamonov and S. Pletneva. According to L. Gumilev, "the identification (?—*Author's note*) of the Bulgars with the Khazars is based on the unjustified placement of an equality sign between ethnos and the archaeological, i.e. material culture, which is mostly represented by pottery (?—*Author's note*) [...] The logic of the authors (M. Artamonov and S. Pletneva—*Author's note*) is simple in the extreme: vessels are easier to study".[143] At the same time, when he claims to have found Khazar burials or places, inhabited by Khazars, L. Gumilev justifies his statements with ... the found pottery.[144] The paradoxical thing here is that these burials are actually Bulgar in origin.[145]

In L. Gumilev's opinion, during the second half of the tenth century parts of the Khazars migrated to the lower reaches of the Volga and the Don Region, bringing with them an agricultural economy.[146] Like many other "theories" of L. Gumilev, this one also has no grounds. It "skips" the period between the eighth and the tenth centuries, when the Don Region was inhabited by Bulgars whose main economic activity was agriculture. It is hardly necessary to stress once more that no compelling proof of ethnic Khazars has been found until now. Even the excavations at Samosdelka (a necropolis has not yet been found there) show the presence of Oghuz and Bulgars, but not Khazars. And according to the archaeologists researching Samosdelka, that was the site of Itil.[147]

Nothing is known about the role of the ethnic Jews in the khaganate. Not a single synagogue has been found until now (unlike the unearthed Christian and pagan temples). The viewpoint of S. Pletneva that a synagogue may have existed in Sarkel currently remains an unverifiable hypothesis.[148] For this reason, I do not deem it necessary to examine the scientific theories on the influence

142 Gumilev 2003, 90 and 139; Gumilev 1997, 55.

143 Gumilev 1997, 60–61.

144 Gumilev 1997, 65.

145 Flerov 1989, 180; Pletneva 1999, 195.

146 Gumilev 1997, 212.

147 See Zilivinskaia, Vasil'ev, and Grechkina 2006, 30 and 33.

148 Pletneva 1996, 29; see Flerov and Flerova 2005, 192.

of Judaism and the Judaized Khazar elite on Khazaria's population. Such, for instance, is M. Artamonov's theory on the divergence of the interests of the population, subject to the khagan, and those of the Khazar nobility.[149] Or the argument of S. Pletneva that Khazaria's Judaization irreversibly separated the Judaized Khazar nobility from the vastly numerous and diverse population, which was kept in submission by force.[150] L. Gumilev expresses a similar view, even assuming that after the Judaization the Khazars became the most suppressed minority of the khaganate.[151] These statements are entirely hypothetical. Ultimately, "the significance of Judaism in Khazaria remains unclear".[152]

At present, the only ethnic groups of which science has some, albeit quite relative, notion are the Bulgars and the Alans. The comparison of regions where both ethnic groups lived side by side or intermingled shows their diverse relations.

The ethnic composition of the Crimea becomes more varied from the east westwards. The monuments on the Kerch and the Taman Peninsulas are mainly Bulgar.[153] The first Bulgar settlements in the Crimea date from the late seventh century or the early eighth. When the second great wave of Bulgar migrants settled in the Crimea in the mid-eighth century, they found a local Alanian and Gothic population (but also remnants of other Sarmatian tribes, including descendants of the ancient Scythians).[154] It is important to note I. Baranov's conclusion that there were no Alans among the bearers of the Saltovo culture in the Crimea. In other words, the "Saltovians" on the peninsula were mainly Bulgars. The Alans who lived there as well as the rest of the Sarmatians were isolated after the Hunnic invasion.[155] Due to the name of one of the main Crimean settlements, Sugdea, a migration of the Sugdeans (a West Caucasian tribe, part of the Kasog-Adyghe community) is presumed to have taken place.[156] However, another interpretation is also possible—one that connects the name of the settlement with the Alans.[157]

The second Bulgar migration wave to the Crimea (that began in the mid-eighth century) reflects the consolidation of the Khazar domination on the

149 Artamonov 1962, 414.

150 Pletneva 1976, 65.

151 Gumilev 1997, 175.

152 Flerova 2001a, 23; see also Golden 2003, no. 3, 151.

153 Zin'ko and Ponomarev 2007; Maiko 2007; Paromov 2003; Sorochan 2004.

154 Iakobson 1973, 9–10 and 38; Baranov 1989 and 1990, 113–117; Maiko 1996; Romashov 2002–2003, 119–141; see also Aibabin 2003, 55–64.

155 Baranov 1990, 105.

156 Aibabin 2003, 57; Baranov 1991, 145.

157 Romashov 2002–2003, 122.

peninsula. At the same time Bulgars and Alans settled along the Don and the Severski Donets, while other Bulgar groups settled in various parts of the North Caucasus. Perhaps this was an intentional ethnic displacement, directed by the nobility of the khaganate. It is not entirely clear whether the newcomers forced the Bulgars they encountered in the Crimea to move westwards by burning down their settlements or they intermingled with them.[158] There are no records of the relations between the Bulgars and the Alans in the Crimea. Quite interesting is one of the necropoles (on the Tepsen Hill), where the male burials are Bulgar, while the female ones are most probably Alanian. Perhaps this group of Bulgars was made up of Khazar soldiers, who, while settling down, sought women among the local population. In the other Bulgar necropoles in the Crimea, the buried men and women have the same ethnic background.[159] According to I. Baranov, the Bulgars were the mainstay of the Khazar Khaganate in the Crimea.[160]

Again during the eighth century, Bulgars settled in various areas of the North Caucasus that were inhabited by Alans (the Caucasian Mineral Waters Region, the Kislovodsk basin and the upper reaches of the Kuban River, on the territory of the Piatigor'e, in Kabardino-Balkaria and the Stavropol Upland).[161] This process was accompanied by the displacement of some parts of the Alans, especially from the vicinity of Kislovodsk, where the Bulgars most probably became the main population during the ninth and tenth centuries.[162] That is the location of large fortified settlements such as the Khumar hillfort and

158 The theory about the ravaging of the Bulgar settlements by the first migration wave and their subsequent ousting from their lands by the second wave belongs to I. Baranov (Baranov 1990, 151; Maiko 1996, 139). In recent times it is being rejected, since no evidence of clashes between the two groups has been found, as well as layers from fires; the widely accepted theory instead being of their gradual mutual assimilation (Maiko 2007, 162–163; Romashov 2002–2003, 140). According to Aibabin 2003, 57, the Bulgars from the second wave peacefully settled down on vacant lands. In Baranov's opinion, the Bulgars from the first migration wave were part of the Unogundur tribe, while those from the second wave belonged to some Bulgaro-Ugrian community that was formed in the Volga area. He bases his assertions on the wooden constructions of their burial monuments (Baranov 1990, 115–117 and 141–145). Similar burials have also been found among the Bulgars in the Don Region. Aksenov 2002 finds Baranov's theory unacceptable. The historian sees this practice as the result of the individual development of the Bulgar burial rites.

159 Baranov 1990, 121.

160 Baranov 1990, 153.

161 Kuznetsov 1962, 30, 76, and 87–88; Fedorov and Fedorov 1978, 77–84; Kovalevskaia 1984, 150 and 155–156; Pletneva 1999, 190–191; Arzhantseva 2007b, 60–63.

162 Kuznetsov 1962, 30; Fedorov and Fedorov 1978, 79–80; Pletneva 1999, 188–189; Arzhantseva 2007a, 84.

Gornoe Ekho which had garrisons that presumably consisted of Bulgars.[163] Of particular interest is the Bulgar (?) Kazazovo necropolis (containing 190 burials) where weapons have been found (swords, spears, bows, etc.)—a feature which is not inherent to the Bulgar burial rite. It gives S. Pletneva reason to assume that these Bulgars served as a military unit (garrison).[164] Between the tenth and the twelfth centuries, there were more than ten large fortresses in the vicinity of the upper reaches of the Kuban. In I. Arzhantseva's opinion, their erection coincides with the consolidation of Khazaria's domination in the North Caucasus during the eighth century.[165]

An interesting account of Al-Masudi about the western parts of the North Caucasus has not yet received a satisfactory explanation. A part of it reads as follows: "near Khazaria and Alania, to the westward, there lie four Turkish nations, who trace their descent originally from a common ancestor. They are both nomad and settled, and are difficult to approach and very courageous. Each of them has a king. The extent of each kingdom is several days' journey. A portion of their territory touches the sea of Nitas (the Black Sea—*Author's note*). Their raids extend to the lands of Rome and almost as far as Spain. They have the mastery over all other nations in these parts. Between them and the king of the Khazars is a truce, and so with the ruler of the Alans. The region where they live is contiguous with Khazaria. The first of these nations is called Bajna [?], next to which is the second, called Bajghird [Bashkir] (presumably the Magyars are here meant). Next to the latter is a nation called Bajnak [Pecheneg], which is the most warlike of these nations, and next again another called Nukardah [?]. Their kings are nomads."[166] It is presumed that Nukardah is some group of Bulgars.[167]

In regions where the prevailing population was Bulgar, the garrisons were made up of another ethnos (for example, of Oghuz in Sarkel and Samkerts). Parts of the Bulgars in the North Caucasus probably had a similar role. This was probably also true for that unknown ethnic group whose presence in the West Caucasus within the territory of the Kasogs and in the Alano-Bulgar region along the middle reaches of the Severski Donets is attested by cremation graves. While there are different views regarding the question of its ethnicity

163 Arzhantseva 2007a, 84; Bidzhiev 1984, 124.

164 Pletneva 1999, 191.

165 Arzhantseva 2007a, 85–87.

166 Dunlop 1967, 212.

167 Novosel'tsev 1990, 107.

(it is mostly thought to be either Ugrian or Kasog), it is also possible that it was related to the Bulgars.[168]

Bulgars and Alans settled extensively in the Severski Donets area in the eighth century. Initially, the Bulgars took the steppe zone, while the Alans settled in the forest-steppe one. In the second half of the ninth century and during the tenth century, the Bulgar presence in the Alanian zone began to grow, including along the upper reaches of the Don and in the Maiaki hillfort.[169] It is also possible that Bulgars settled in the forest-steppe zone even earlier, as well as alongside the Alans.[170] In this area, unlike some regions in the North Caucasus for example, the Bulgars and the Alans implemented the khaganate's policy.[171] Quite notable is the higher militarization of the population, whose settlements were located along the upper reaches of the Severski Donets,[172] in a region that bordered Slavic (Severì) settlements.[173]

Scientists disagree on the status of the Don Region (north and west of Sarkel). On the one hand, it is asserted that it was a semi-autonomous "tributary" region,[174] and on the other—that it was part of the central lands of the khaganate.[175] According to A. Tortika, the alliance with Khazaria was beneficial for the Alano-Bulgars there. They upheld it even when the Khazar state grew weaker. Their position changed from full submission to the establishment of a relatively independent political structure by the middle or end of the tenth century. "The degree of the region's autonomy and its differentiation from the Khazar authorities probably fluctuated in accordance with the strengthening

168 Aksenov 1998, 2004b, 2005, 2007, and 2008; Aksenova 2007; Kovalevskaia 1981a, 90–93; Mikheev 1982, 1985, 23, and 2004, 88–89; Pletneva 1989, 4; Pletneva 1997, 50–52; Pletneva 1999, 48, and 78–79; Pletneva 2005, 22–23; Rashev 2008, 171; Dimitrov 1987, 85–87; Dmitriev 2003; Gavritukhin and P'iankov 2003; Flerova 2001a, 43–50.

169 Pletneva 1989, 259–273; Pletneva 1999, 52 and 60–64; Vinnikov and Pletneva 1998, 209–212; Vinnikov and Afanas'ev 1991, 140.

170 Pletneva 1989, 268. Aksenov 2005, 219–222 assumes that the Netailovo necropolis (which is situated in the Alanian zone, near Verkhnii Saltov) is left by a population, related to the Unogundurs and consequently to the Bulgars from the first migration wave in the Crimea. Baranov 1990, 117 also comments on such a connection. According to V. Aksenov, the Bulgars came to this area together with the Alans. In Konduktorova's opinion, both Alanian and Bulgar tribes participated in the creation of the forest-steppe (Alanian) version of the Saltovo culture (Konduktorova 1984, 236).

171 See for instance Novosel'tsev 1990, 202; Tortika 2006a, 96.

172 Pletneva 1989, 278; Tortika 2006a, 133.

173 On the relations between the Slavs and the "Saltovians" along the upper reaches of the Severski Donets, see chapter 4.4.

174 Aksenov 2005, 227–228; Tortika 2002, 145.

175 Romashov 2002–2003, 148.

or weakening of the central government".[176] Also, a process of gradual assimilation between Bulgars and Alans can be noted—it was reflected in the anthropological type and in the burial rites, especially during the ninth and tenth centuries. It increased with time and therefore the theory of V. Gening that the Pecheneg invasion put a stop to this process cannot be accepted.[177] The Pecheneg invasion probably caused a larger influx of Bulgars to the Alanian lands. Naturally, the merging of the two ethnic groups should not be overestimated,[178] but the theories, according to which the "Yases", mentioned in Russian sources, are a common ethnonym for the Bulgars and the Alans in the Severski Donets region between the eleventh and the twelfth centuries, do have a point.[179] It could be presumed that if the Bulgars and Alans were viewed as a whole during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, they would have had a common ethnonym. The "Yases" ethnonym was used for the population of the Don Region, since the Alans lived in close proximity to the lands, controlled by Kiev. It should, however, be borne in mind that in comparison to the Alans, the Bulgars were far more numerous in this part of Khazaria, which is also the most likely location of Black Bulgaria.[180]

Ultimately, the population in the Don Region consisted of "various ethnic components that arrived here at different times and in different historical circumstances. These components were not complete ethno-social organisms. They were made up of fragmented parts of ethnic communities, which, until their inclusion in the Khazar Khaganate, were formed and functioned in different economic and political conditions and on different territories. These Turkic- and Iranian-speaking, Ugric and Slavic components which together made up quite a numerous population were unified by two factors: the adop-

176 Tortika 2006a, 223–224.

177 Gening 1989, 13.

178 See the review of Flerov and Krasnov 1989, 284. Fedorov and Fedorov 1978, 111 presume that the Bulgaro-Alanian merging was much more intense in the area of the Lower Sulak in Dagestan. According to Tortika 2006a, 149, over time between the upper reaches of the Severski Donets and the Don conditions arose for the emergence of "a synthetic early feudal nationality—the Alano-Bulgars".

179 Kravchenko 2004, 269; Pletneva 1989, 269. A similar theory, namely that the Yases from the Russian sources also included the Black Bulgars, was supported by Mavrodin 1945, 190 already in 1945. It is interesting that Bubenok 1997, 45 rejects Mavrodin's view, since it was influenced by the ideas of N. Marr. But in fact, by assuming that the Yases were the bearers of the steppe version of the Saltovo culture, O. Bubenok argues in favor of the same theory (Bubenok 1997, 37–44).

180 See more details in chapter 2. According to Tortika 2006a, 127, the Bulgars were "the most active ethnic levelling element" in the Don Region.

tion of the same Saltovo culture, in the creation of which, moreover, many of them actively participated".[181] It is presumed that migrants from Middle Asia or Transcaucasia also settled among the Bulgars living along the middle reaches of the Severski Donets.[182] The Bulgars in the Don Region probably lived not only alongside pagans, but Christians and Muslims as well.[183]

Describing the lands, subordinate to the khaganate, the Khazar ruler Joseph does not mention settlements located north or northwest of Sarkel, although more than twenty fortresses were located there, including the Maiaki hillfort and the adjacent brick fortifications (most likely built by Khazars), the Saltovo hillfort and the whole line of fortresses along the Severski Donets. Since Joseph mentions neither Phanagoria on the Taman Peninsula (an important Khazar center during the eighth and ninth centuries) nor the Semikarakorsk hillfort, which most probably did not exist during the tenth century (i.e. he is completely accurate in the naming of his subordinate settlements), we should ask ourselves why he omits such a vast and significant area. The theory that it was ravaged by the Pechenegs in the late ninth and the early tenth century is unacceptable. It is possible that it was the location of Black Bulgaria, which gained its independence from Khazaria during the reign of Joseph. But that would hardly stop the Khazar ruler from mentioning it one way or another, as he does with other regions with a similar status. The explanation to this question can perhaps be found elsewhere.

In 944, after the events described in the *Cambridge Document*,[184] when Rus' and Byzantium signed a peace treaty, one of its provisions was that the Rus' would not allow attacks by Black Bulgars on the Byzantine domains in the Crimea.[185] Joseph wrote his letter in the late 950s or the early 960s (before 961). We do not actually know what went on between Rus', Byzantium and Khazaria during the 940s and 950s (the Pechenegs also played an important role there). There is, however, some scope for assumptions regarding the participation of Rus' troops in the Byzantine army or with the Burjan (probably the Black

181 Mikheev 2004, 90.

182 Krasil'nikov 2007, 77–89.

183 Aksenov 2004a, 136–144; Krasil'nikov 2007, 87–88.

184 The Khazar war against the Rus' and the Byzantines in the Crimea in 939–940, followed by a Rus' campaign against Byzantium in 944 and later in the Caspian Sea. On this issue, see Artamonov 1962, 373–375; Gumilev 1997, 222–224; Maiko 1997, 113; Shepard and Franklin 2000, 172–174; Polovoi 1961, 98–102. The text of the *Cambridge Document* can be found in Golb and Pritzak 1997, 138–142.

185 *Povest' vremennykh let*, in Adrianova-Peretts 1950, 34.

Bulgars), mentioned in the particularly interesting account of Al-Masudi from the 950s.[186]

The Khazar ruler stated that he was fighting the Rus'. Theoretically, it is completely plausible that the military actions between the Khazars and the Rus' also included the Severski Donets region. The fortresses and settlements located there may have been subjected to attacks and plunders from Kievan Rus'. Such a conclusion seems probable also in light of the comment in *Hudud al-'Alam* that "the Inner Bulgars were at war with all the Rus' ".[187]

Povest' Vremennykh Let describes the campaigns of Prince Sviatoslav from 964–966. The Chronicle mentions only that he subdued the Viatichi and seized Sarkel, before fighting with the Yases and Kasogs somewhere along the Don and Kuban Rivers.[188] Another interpretation is also possible, namely that he conquered not only Sarkel, but also "their city" (that of the Khazars).[189] On the basis of Ibn Hawqal's account (977), it is presumed that "their city" is in fact Itil. According to Ibn Hawqal, in 968–969 the Rus' seized Bolgar, Samandar and Itil. The Eastern writer adds: "the Inner Bulgars—Christians and Muslims. But in our times almost nothing remains of the Bulgars, Burtas and the Khazars, since they were attacked by the Rus' who conquered all their lands; those who saved themselves settled in the neighboring regions".[190]

Ibn Hawqal's account is the basis of the hypothesis that after his campaign against the Viatichi in 964, Prince Sviatoslav marched on along the Oka towards the Volga without returning to Kiev. He spent the winter of 964–965 somewhere in these lands, before attacking the Volga Bulgars and plundering Bolgar. As he continued southwards along the Volga, he seized Itil and Samandar, after which he conquered the Yases and the Kasogs and overtook Sarkel, before returning to Kiev.[191]

Already V. Bartol'd began to doubt the possibility of Sviatoslav having passed through Volga Bulgaria on his way to the Khazar centers along the Caspian coast.[192] T. Kalinina has proven that the events, described by Ibn Hawqal, do

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186 See in chapter 2. According to Tortika 2006a, 245–246 and 497, the Rus' aimed to tear away Sarkel and Samkerts from the khaganate. Khazaria perished after the Rus' campaigns from the second half of the 960s and the establishment of the Rus' Tmutarakan principality.

187 *Hudud al-'Alam* &45, in Minorsky 1937.

188 *Povest' Vremennykh Let*, in Adrianova-Peretts 1950, 46–47.

189 Golden 1980, 82.

190 The text can be found in Novosel'tsev 1990, 221–222; Kalinina 1976, 91; Dunlop 1967, 215–217; Golden 1980, 83.

191 See for instance Gadlo 1971, 60; Pashuto 1968, 93; Gumilev 1997, 240–241; Artamonov 1962, 427–429.

192 Bartol'd 1963, 850–851.

not refer to 965, but to 968–969. According to her, in 965 Sviatoslav seized Sarkel and conquered the Yases and the Kasogs, without continuing on towards Itil or Samandar.[193] This viewpoint is wholly supported by A. Novosel'tsev, who does not see any reason to believe that Sviatoslav devastated the area around the middle reaches of the Volga and Volga Bulgaria in particular.[194] All three scholars believe that Ibn Hawqal mixed up the Volga Bulgars with the Danube ones. It should, however, be borne in mind that the Eastern writer explicitly names the Inner Bulgars. So, if the devastation of Bolgar did not refer to Volga Bulgaria, it is quite possible that the account was referring to the Black (Inner) Bulgars. It should also be noted that the earliest texts of *Povest' Vremennykh Let* were written in the early twelfth century, when Russian sources used the ethnonym "Yases" for the population of the Don Region. This confirms that the breakthrough of the Rus' in the war against Khazaria was implemented through the Bulgaro-Alanian lands near the Don and the Severski Donets.[195] Russian geographical notions of the steppe zone during this period probably did not extend farther than the Don to the east. The main center to the south-east, for which some vague records existed, was Tmutarakan.[196] It is highly possible that "their city" (if it does not refer to Sarkel) could be Samkerts

193 Kalinina 1976, 93. Tortika 2006a, 186–187 expresses a similar opinion.

194 Novosel'tsev 1990, 225; a summary of the various views on the topic can be found in Romashov 2005, 119–128. In Romashov's opinion, Sviatoslav advanced from the Sea of Azov and seized Samkerts, before conquering Sarkel and moving on towards the lands of the Kasogs and the Alans in the Caucasus. Sviatoslav did not participate in the campaign of 969 (the conquering of Itil and Samandar) (Romashov 2005, 128–129 and 135–138).

195 According to Tortika 2006a, 229, the destruction in Sarkel and the Tsimliansk hillfort was most probably related to Sviatoslav's campaign. This campaign aimed to "intimidate" and to undermine the military potential of the Bulgaro-Alanian population in the Severski Donets area (who had the diplomatic and military support of the Khazar "government" until the mid-tenth century), the result of which was the conquest of Sarkel and the defeat of "some" Yases and Kasogs (Tortika 2006a, 492).

196 The earliest preserved copies of *Povest' Vremennykh Let* date from the early twelfth century. They include a second edition from 1116 (in the *Laurentian Chronicle* from 1377) and a third one from 1118 (in the *Hypatian Chronicle* of the fifteenth century) (Mikhailov 1999, 11–12). At the same time (1117), the population of Belaia Vezha (Sarkel) migrated to Kievan Rus'. After 1094, there is no more mention of Tmutarakan in the Russian chronicles. It is presumed that the end of the Tmutakan principality came along with the migration of the Belaia Vezha population to Kievan Rus'. From that moment on, not only the areas around the lower reaches of the Volga, but also the Don Region (generally the whole steppe, which the Cumans conquered by the end of the eleventh century) became *terra incognita* in the geographical notions of the Rus' (see for example Artamonov 1962, 444 and 452–453).

(Tmutarakan), which was the main Khazar center in the western part of Khazaria. It is this city that the Kievan Prince Vladimir recaptured in the 980s, during his war against the Khazars.[197] Samkerts became the center of the Russian Tmutarakan principality. It is therefore no coincidence that the title of one of the Tmutarakan princes, Rostislav Vladimirovich (1064–1066), was "archon of Matrakha (Tmutarakan), Zichia and the whole Khazaria".[198]

It could be argued that after Sviatoslav's military campaigns Tmutarakan became a unifying center for the subjects of the Khazar Khaganate who populated the vicinity of the Taman Peninsula and the Kuban River. According to both V. Maiko and I. Baranov, after Pesakh's campaign in the Crimea (in the 940s) the Bulgars (the majority of which were Christians who supported Byzantium's policy) were ousted from the peninsula and replaced by a new population. V. Maiko assumes that it mainly consisted of ethnic Khazars and Alans. The two historians believe that the 940s and 950s were the heyday of the Khazar domination on the peninsula.[199] So it is no coincidence that in the subsequent centuries this region (and the Crimea in particular) became known as Khazaria.[200]

In the highlighted events different groups of Bulgars held different positions. The Christianized Bulgars in the Crimea probably supported Byzantium (especially in light of the close relations that existed at that time between the already Christian Danube Bulgaria and the Byzantine Empire), while the mostly pagan Bulgar population along the Don and the Severski Donets supported Khazaria. Much later, in 1016, after an almost 40-year war between Bulgaria and Byzantium, the Christianized Bulgars in the Crimea rebelled against the Byzantine Empire (led by Georgius Tzul who was probably a Byzantine dignitary) and were crushed by the joined forces of the Rus' and the Byzantines,[201] who together plundered the Bulgarian lands on the Balkans as well.[202]

The reasons for Khazaria's "disappearance" should not only be sought "inside" the khaganate. We have almost no information on the situation in Khazaria during the second half of the tenth century (unlike the available

197 Gadlo 1990, 21–23.

198 Gadlo 1991, 7.

199 Baranov 1990, 54; Baranov and Maiko 2001, 109–110; Maiko 1997, 113–114 and 2002. According to Aibabin 2003, 77, Pesakh destroyed most of the Bulgar settlements in the Crimea.

200 See for instance Artamonov 1962, 446; Baranov 1990, 53; Romashov 2005, 152.

201 On these events, see Sokolova 1971; Artamonov 1962, 437; Gadlo 1990, 27; Romashov 2005, 144–146.

202 Zlatarski 1994, 767; see also Giuzelev 2000, 36; Pavlov 2000, 97.

records on Tsar Samuil (991–1014) for example, and his descendants in Danube Bulgaria).[203] The campaigns of the Kievan Prince Sviatoslav did not destroy the Khazar Khaganate. However, as with Danube Bulgaria, they did initiate the beginning of the khaganate's end. A relation should therefore be sought between the simultaneous downfall of two states that for several centuries defined the shape and development of a large part of Eastern Europe.

V. Tatishchev's *Russian History* contains interesting facts about the campaigns of Prince Sviatoslav from the 960s. According to him, the reason behind Sviatoslav's campaign to Bulgaria in 968 was the help that the Bulgars offered the Khazars. On the banks of the Dniester the Rus' were met by the joined forces of the Bulgars, Khazars, Kasogs and the Yases. With the help of Magyar troops Sviatoslav won the battle, defeating the Bulgars and the Khazars and capturing 80 cities along the Dniester, the Danube and some other rivers. He settled in Preslavets on the Danube, maintaining good relations with the Magyars.[204]

We should ask ourselves why Danube Bulgaria and the Khazar Khaganate both sustained irreparable damage at the same time from the same enemy. Based on our knowledge of the reign of the Bulgarian Tsar Petar (927–970) and the Khazar ruler Joseph, their defeat seems surprising. In reality, the events examined here reflect a major conflict that engulfed Eastern Europe and Middle Asia. It involved Kievan Rus', the Khazar Khaganate, Byzantium, Danube Bulgaria, but also Khwarezm, the Oghuz and the Pechenegs, as well as Germany and Hungary. Gradually, the Polish, Czechs and the Danes were also drawn into it.[205]

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203 There are sporadic reports of Rus' military actions against the Khazars and the Volga Bulgars during the 980s and 990s. In addition, there is also information on campaigns of the Rus' in Dagestan during the second half of the 980s (as allies of the emir of Derbent), aimed against Shirvan, whose ruler, according to Ibn Hawqal, after 969 supported the return of the Khazars to Itil. See Gadlo 1990, 21–23; Pashuto 1968, 95 and 103–104; Artamonov 1962, 435–439; Tolstov 1948b, 256–262; Novosel'tsev 1990, 228; Kalinina 1976, 93; Ashurbeili 1983, 81; Fakhrutdinov 1984, 44–45.

204 Tatishchev 1963, 49; the account is from the *Ioachim Chronicle* (from the the seventeenth century), the content of which has been preserved only in the work of V. Tatishchev, written in the seventeenth or eighteenth century (books 1–5, 1768–1848) (Mikhailov 1999, 14 and 56–57). The account from this source is wholly supported by Sakharov 1991, 50 and 119.

205 During the second half of the tenth century, the rivalry between Germany and Byzantium grew into a full-blown military conflict on the territory of Italy (in the 960s). Prior to 988, as well as between 1015 and 1019, Kievan Rus' wavered between Germany and Byzantium, which caused conflicts among the Rus' princes. In the 970s, warfare raged between Germany on one hand and the Czech state, Poland and Denmark on the other. At the

During these fateful years, the military actions affected the whole territory of Khazaria. The information available for the period between the 960s and the 990s allows the assertion that a large part of the ethnic groups in the khaganate took the Khazars' side. This is true not only with regard to the ethnic groups from the "inner" Khazar lands (the so-called domain of Joseph), but also for the groups from the "peripheral", formally tributary regions and states. A telling example are the Viatichi who were conquered four times by the Kievan princes (twice by Sviatoslav (in 964 and 966) and twice by Vladimir (in 981 and 982). Sviatoslav's campaigns initiated a significant shift in the political and ethnic map of Eastern Europe. This process lasted for about a century.

Essentially, the conflict between the Rus' and the Khazars was a war between Byzantium and Khazaria. It is quite possible that the change in relations between Bulgaria and the Byzantine Empire from the 960s onwards[206] was a reflection of it. Also of importance is the fact that a large part of the Bulgar settlements in the Khazar state were subjected to destruction and ruin as well. Thus, probably all the Bulgar communities in Eastern Europe became allies of the Khazars. The same is also true for the Alans. The Kasogs were most probably also an ally of the Khazars. Volga Bulgaria not only survived, but emerged as a kind of successor to the khaganate in the Volga region, in rivalry with Kievan Rus' and Khwarezm.[207]

The position of the Pechenegs was controversial, since they were the "spear" of the Rus' against the Khazars according to Ibn Hawqal, but beginning from the late 980s and especially in the 990s they fought almost constantly with Kievan Rus'.[208] S. Tolstov ties the Pecheneg attacks to the policy of Khwarezm.[209]

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same time Kievan Rus' organized military campaigns against the Czech state and Poland. In 1018, the Polish Prince Bolesław I (992–1025) even entered Kiev, in support of Prince Sviatopolk (1015–1019) (who altered Vladimir's policies and was an ally of the Pechenegs, for instance) against Yaroslav (1019–1054). At the same time Poland was at war with Germany, whose allies then were the Czech state and Hungary. For more details on this subject, see Ostrogorski 1996, 375–411; Nazarenko 1994; Gumilev 1997, 307–308; Shepard and Franklin 2000, 290–291; Pashuto 1968, 36; Mavrodin 1945, 353.

206 See for instance Ostrogorski 1996, 376–382; Ivanov 1981.

207 On Khwarezm, see Artamonov 1962, 433; Tolstov 1948b, 253–256.

208 According to *Povest' Vremennykh Let*, the war between the Rus' and the Pechenegs erupted in 988. The Russian chronicle tells of Pecheneg attacks in 991, 992, 993, 996 and 997 (in Adrianova-Peretts 1950, 83–87). During this period (from 988 till 995), Rus' troops joined the Byzantine army also for the campaigns of Basil II (976–1025) against Bulgaria from 991 to 995 (Pashuto 1968, 76). The last record of Rus' forces fighting on Byzantium's side in the war against Bulgaria dates from 1017. The *Nikon Chronicle* tells of campaigns of the Kievan Prince Vladimir against the Volga Bulgars in 994 and 997 (Fakhrutdinov 1984, 44–45).

209 Tolsov 1948b, 262.

Perhaps Danube Bulgaria's attempt to seek help from the Pechenegs against Byzantium in 1017 was no coincidence.[210]

The conduct of the Oghuz however remains a mystery. Historians tend to regard an account of Ibn Miskawayh, repeated by Ibn Al-Asir, as a reference to them: according to it, some Turks plundered Itil in 965.[211] It is, however, also quite possible that it was referring to the Pechenegs who were allies of Sviatoslav at that time. In the 980s, the Oghuz were allies of Vladimir in his campaigns against the Khazars in Tmutarakan and against Volga Bulgaria.[212]

The events from the second half of the tenth century show a unity between the ethnic groups in the khaganate against Kievan Rus' and Byzantium. Khazaria was defended not only by the "Saltovians", but also by many of the nearby tribes with different cultures. The boundaries between the "inner" and "outer" ethnic communities became blurry. The "inner" conflicts in Khazaria did not "overshadow" the whole or the Khazar World/Order. The notion of belonging to this world may have exceeded the political opposition. We do not know how the diverse population that was subject to the khaganate saw its place in Khazaria. Nevertheless, we can reasonably assume that the Khazar state owed its existence to its support.

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210 Bozhilov 1973, 60–61; Dimitrov 1989, 84.

211 Novosel'tsev 1990, 222; Tolstov 1948b, 252; Artamonov 1962, 431–432.

212 *Povest' vremennykh let*, in Adrianova-Peretts 1950, 58–59; Tolstov 1948b, 256; Artamonov 1962, 435–436; see also Romashov 2005, 129–131.

Conclusion

Theoretical models are often used in the study of states from the past, as well as in the search for the reasons behind their emergence or decline. Khazaria fits into the general theory on steppe empires that existed in the Eurasian Steppe from the first millennium BC until the middle of the second millennium AD. The economy of the steppes was dominated by various forms of nomadic pastoralism. This is why science also uses ethnographic data on the nomadic communities from the last couple of centuries. It is similar in content to the written sources on the tribes that inhabited the steppes from the time of the Scythians onwards. Their authors are, however, external observers who describe only part of the lifestyle and traditions of the steppe communities. It would not be too much to argue that both the written sources and the ethnographic data can be deceiving in the study of states like the Khazar Khaganate. On the one hand, steppe empires are remote in time and we do not have direct observations of such structures; on the other, the accounts usually refer to a part of the population, which is nomadic, but do not clarify the nature of the steppe state itself.

Archaeological finds play a significant role in the development of our notions of the steppe statehood. They greatly expand our knowledge of the economy and the ideology of steppe empires. However, their inclusion in the theoretical postulations of various historians has been relatively slow. Time is needed for the collection, publication and understanding of the archaeological material that covers a period of thousands of years and that is scattered over the vast expanse of the Eurasian Steppe and its surrounding areas. That is why even today the study of Khazaria (and other steppe empires) is dominated by formulations based on the nomadic economy theory. It is no coincidence that the term "nomadic empire" is often used as a synonym for "steppe empire", although this is not quite accurate in view of the mixed stockbreeding and agriculture economy that most of these state entities had. When using the term "nomadic empire", historians are increasingly forced to explain that it refers to either not completely nomadic or completely non-nomadic states. The economy of the steppe states was usually comprised in equal parts of various economic practices. The use of the term "steppe empire" would help avoid any unnecessary clarifications.

According to quite a few scholars, since the centrifugal tendencies in the steppe states were strong and many of the individual tribes or communities that they consisted of had a semi-autonomous status, there was no internal integration between them and such states easily collapsed. Thus, steppe empires are sometimes defined as confederations or federations. Power was

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maintained by military force, which depended not on the development of the khaganate's economy, but rather on external revenues (provided by plunder, taxes or trade).[1]

The Khazar Khaganate is a steppe empire not because of its economy, but due to a number of features, related to its ideology, material culture and state structure. They are common or similar for a significant in size territory, exceeding the steppe area, and do not depend on the level of sedentariness or nomadism of its population. This is why theoretical formulations that define the types and development of the empires in the Eurasian Steppe on the basis of their economy are impossible or at least difficult to apply to Khazaria.

T. Noonan highlights the diversity of the Khazar economy. Centralized power, along with military forces, ensured the accession of areas that were suitable for agriculture (in the forest-steppe zone, for example). They were used for the settlement of "nomadic" peoples (like the Bulgars: most of their settlements were located in the steppe zone) or the accession of already sedentary populations. Preconditions arose for an economic and ethnic integration. Such a system (which was also typical for the Scythians) made the state less vulnerable to hostile sedentary neighbors, climate changes or livestock diseases. Thus, a diverse and relatively self-sufficient economy was the basis for the political domination and the military power of the state.[2] These findings are additionally supported by fragmentary written records that indicate a well-developed agriculture in the Khazar Khaganate. Similar conclusions can also be made with regard to other steppe empires. For example, according to archaeological evidence, the Kimek State had a semi-sedentary economy during the ninth and tenth centuries, along with irrigation canals and monumental architectural structures.[3] And L. Kyzlasov writes about the significant development of a sedentary economy among the Huns in Asia.[4] The results of archaeological excavations indicate that many of the existing theories on the steppe state economy need reassessment. The examples in this regard are ever increasing.

The study of the issues surrounding the emergence of statehood in the steppe world in light of the relations between nomads and sedentary peoples seems purely theoretical. The level of sedentariness and the form of dependence of the sedentary communities (foreign (external) for the state itself) are

1 On Khazaria, see the monographs of Dunlop 1962; Golden 1980; Artamonov 1962; Pletneva 1976; Novosel'tsev 1990; Gumilev 1997.

2 Noonan 1995–1997, 294–295.

3 Kumekov 1972, 88–89.

4 Kyzlasov 1998.

important for determining the state's typology. Economy is seen as equivalent to ethnicity, and the development of agriculture and handicrafts, as well as the establishment of urban centers are all attributed to the resettlement of a sedentary population of foreign origins. According to this theory, a nomadic state rarely emerges without the conquest or subjugation of a sedentary population. This omits the possibility for a state with "nomadic" traditions (cultural, governmental and ideological) to be established by the nomads themselves. It is quite possible that its territory included significant agricultural (sedentary) sectors. This sometimes was the result of a centuries-long development that went unnoticed by its neighbors.

Sources tell of the migration of new tribes that established nomadic unions. It should however be kept in mind that they did not loose touch with the places they came from. In their old lands they had engaged in agriculture and handicrafts. Their settlement in the new lands took time—around a century—and later sources surprise us with accounts of cities, agriculture and handicrafts. In Eastern Europe, the migrations that followed one another were "superimposed" on the same territory and did not always cause the destruction or disappearance of the agricultural and craft sectors, developed by previous populations. Along with this, constant (centuries-long) cultural ties can be traced between Eastern Europe and Middle Asia. The newcomers would often discover a familiar environment, both in a cultural and an economical sense. The propinquity was sometimes also ethnic.

According to the existing concepts in science, the Khazar Khaganate is an early state or a complex form of chiefdom.[5] With regard to the steppe empires, N. Kradin uses the term "super-complex chiefdom".[6] The steppe empire can also be defined as a "barbaric state"[7] or an ancestral state.[8] Despite their many similarities, steppe empires have features that distinguish them from one another. Quite common among the steppe communities is a transition from more complex forms of statehood to simpler ones and vice versa. In general, there are cases of a transition from a complex, stock-breeding and agricultural economy (with a greater or lesser prevalence of stock-breeding) to an economy that relied exclusively or almost exclusively on stock-breeding, as well as transitions from a stock-breeding economy to a nearly complete sedentarization. The use of the one-track evolutionary approach that was typical for

5 One example are the so-called by Carneiro 2000 "compound" chiefdoms (as in compound, a combination of molecules).

6 Kradin 2001b, 25–27 and 2001a, 240–247; Kradin and Skrynnikova 2006, 50–51.

7 Kradin 2001a, 44; Kradin and Skrynnikova 2006, 53.

8 In accordance with the definition, used by Stepanov 1999a, 63–65 regarding Danube Bulgaria.

the Marxists and some neo-evolutionists and that studies the nomadic society's development from stock-breeding towards agriculture, is inapplicable in the case of the steppe statehood. The same applies for the so-called stagnation or immobility of the steppe nomads, prompting A. Toynbee to define a separate nomadic civilization and to include it among the so-called stillborn civilizations.[9] A far more appropriate approach would be a multi-linear one, i.e. the idea that evolution (seen as a process that is not necessarily progressive) can take on multiple directions that do not arise from the same causes and do not lead to the same results.[10] With regard to the nomads, the various possibilities and courses for development are perhaps best presented by A. Khazanov.[11]

As was mentioned previously, most studies of the steppe empires are based on the theory of a cultural, economic and ideological divide between the nomadic world and the agricultural one.[12] The nomadic community is almost always presented as separate (ethnically or culturally) from the sedentary ones. It is assumed that the idea of establishing a state was not inherent to the nomads and so it did not emerge, in light of their inner development. Since the nomadic pastoralist economy did not provide enough food for the population, it needed the produce of the farmers. This produce was obtained through plunder or a compulsory tribute, which prompted the nomads to enter into stronger alliances.

According to Th. Barfield's theory, the strength of the steppe empire was proportional to the power of the neighboring sedentary state (which in this case was China). When China became weak, the nomads did not create strong unions. And vise versa, a strong China caused the emergence of the Hunnu state.[13] As N. Kradin notes, the opposite is also possible (a strong steppe state next to a weak China), although he sides in general with the theory of Th. Barfield.[14]

Th. Barfield believes that steppe states resembled empires, which he calls "shadow empires" or "mirror empires", since they were imperial in appearance, but did not undergo significant changes in their inner structures in the direction of the empire model before them (China). They were secondary empires,

9 Toynbee 2001.

10 See the generalizing article of Claessen 2000.

11 Khazanov, 1994.

12 Khazanov 1975, 1994, and 2001; Pletneva 1982; Kradin 2001a and 2001b; Kradin and Skrynnikova 2006; Barfield 2001a and 2001b.

13 Barfield 2001a and 2001b.

14 Kradin and Skrynnikova 2006, 122–123.

in contrast to the primary empire China, and could not exist without interacting with a real (primary) imperial state.[15]

This view is also shared by N. Kradin. According to him, the steppe empire was a "semi-periphery" or a "satellite" of the neighboring agricultural state. At the same time, the "metropolis" of the steppe empire was a periphery of the conquered agricultural societies.[16] This theory artificially shifts the centers that were important for the development of the steppe communities themselves. It reduces the role of the steppe ruler to that of a military leader and a redistributor of agricultural spoils.[17]

Historians that follow the above-cited model usually do not pay enough attention to the sacralized authority that was typical for all state entities in the steppes. Through his ability to communicate with the world of the gods the ruler ensured the well-being of his subjects. It is no coincidence that power was passed on only among members of the "royal" family. Since sacral power belonged to the family, the personality of the ruler was not essential. If he failed to fulfill his duties (including ensuring the fertility of the land) he could be deposed (killed) and replaced with a relative. This is why other families rarely tried to usurp the royal throne in the steppe empires. It is important to bear in mind that the ruler accepted death (the length of his rule, equivalent to the duration of his life) already during the ritual of his enthronement. Upon ascending the throne he ceased to belong to "this world" and become "otherworldly". Thus he acquired his supernatural abilities. The notion of sovereignty in Khazaria comes extremely close to the classic motif in J. Fraser's "*The Golden Bough*".

Most historians do not deny the existence of an agricultural economy in the steppe empires, while stressing that it had developed in limited areas of low productivity, among foreign agricultural communities that had been conquered by the nomads, or among forcibly resettled farmers. It is usually asserted that the nomads harbored nothing but contempt for the sedentary lifestyle, since to them settling down meant dropping out of the community and the loss of important opportunities for support and protection.[18] What is

15 Barfield 2001a and 2001b. Pritsak 1981a, 11 also sees the steppe empires as "mirroring" the sedentary ones, although in a different sense. For instance, the idea of a universal governance and the introduction of a universal law and order apply to both kinds of societies.

16 Kradin 1994; Kradin 2001a, 38–39 and 251–252; Kradin and Skrynnikova 2006, 53.

17 See for instance the works of N. Kradin, although he does note the importance of charisma for the rulers of the steppe states.

18 Khazanov 1994, 83–84 and 199; Kradin 2001a, 96; cf. Stepanov 2002b, 28, according to whom the Alans, Bulgars, Khazars, Uyghurs and the Magyars have demonstrated "many

being forgotten is that information on individual nomadic tribal groups cannot create a complete rendering of the manners and customs in the steppe empire. Thus, the Oghuz are given as an example of a people that despised engaging in agriculture. But the Oghuz had cities and settlements, as well as irrigation agriculture. The account of Ibn Fadlan, who passed through steppe territories ruled by the Oghuz in the early tenth century, depicts a nomadic community. But would it have been the same if on his way to Volga Bulgaria Ibn Fadlan had passed through the Oghuz urban centers along the lower reaches of the Syr Darya? A similar duality can be seen among various nomadic ethnic groups. On the Balkans, the Yuruks and the Vlachs (Tsintsars) included both nomads and semi-nomads and a sedentary urban population, and the "citizens" were by no means poor.[19] This clarification is important in view of the presumption that only the poorest parts of the nomadic society settled down and engaged in agriculture.[20] At times it was actually so, but not always. On the other hand, proponents of this theory often argue that a true nomad is a poor nomad.[21] In other words, in order to be able to survive, the nomad had to take up farming as well.

According to many historians, agriculture was more accessible to the nomads in the western parts of the Eurasian Steppe (west of the Volga), where the natural conditions were more suitable. At the same time, the nobility continued to lead a nomadic lifestyle. Khazaria usually serves as an example for such an economy, based on the account of the Khazar ruler Joseph, according to which he left his capital in spring and travelled through his subject territories, before returning back home in winter.[22] More likely, the account referred to a ritual that was typical not only for the nomadic societies, but also for quite a few sedentary ones with a structure resembling that of an early state.[23] According to N. Di Cosmo, agriculture, along with the notion of statehood, was not the product of an external influence, but the result of the inner development of the steppe societies.[24] The agriculture of the stock-breeding nomads

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times an extraordinary flexibility or adaptability as former nomads (or semi-nomads) towards a sedentary way of life".

19 See Kal'onski 2007.

20 Khazanov 1975, 150 and 1994, 83; Pletneva 1982, 38.

21 These words belong to Lattimore 1940, quoted from Kradin 2001a, 95.

22 Golden 1980, 105; Artamonov 1962, 398; Pletneva 1967, 47 and 147; Pletneva 1989, 24; Pletneva 1999, 33 and 203; Noonan 1995–1997, 259.

23 See Kobishchanov 1995.

24 Di Cosmo 1994. See especially Di Cosmo 1999 and 2004, 167–190. E. Kychanov also asserts that statehood among nomads was the result of their inner development. Unfortunately,

is examined by G. Györffy with regard to the Magyar economy in Pannonia.[25] G. Markov gives various examples of combined stock-breeding and agriculture. He believes that farming, handicrafts and trade played a larger or smaller role in the nomadic economy that was otherwise dominated by stock-breeding.[26] His conclusions indicate that in this regard there is no significant difference between the eastern and the western parts of the Eurasian Steppe.

According to T. Noonan, the theory about the dependence of the steppe communities on their sedentary neighbors is inapplicable to the Khazar Khaganate. He compares the Khazar economy with the typically nomadic economy of the Pechenegs and the Cumans from the same territory and arrives at the conclusion that various nomadic peoples who inhabit the same territory during different time periods can develop very different economies. Of significant importance as well is the presence or lack of a sufficiently strong and centralized state apparatus.[27] Since large numbers of the Pechenegs and Cumans had a mixed (stock-breeding and agricultural) economy before migrating to Europe, this conclusion needs additional clarification.[28]

The fragmentary archaeological data shows that some of the Pechenegs and the Cumans engaged in agriculture even after their migration to Europe (in the eleventh and twelfth centuries). The possible role of the remaining sedentary Saltovian population should also be noted. Sources tell of urban (settlement) centers, subject to the Cumans and located in the steppe zone (along the Severski Donets), as well as in the Crimea. Similar centers were also created by the Kievan Rus'-dependant alliance between the Oghuz (Torks) and the Pechenegs in the Ros' Region. The Cumans were bound to the Chernihiv principality.[29] An important factor determining the development of the steppe statehood and economy is the symbiosis that these steppe tribes formed with the Rus' principalities in the forest-steppe zone.[30]

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his work *Kochevye gosudarstva ot gunnov do man'chzhurov* (Moscow, 1997) remained unattainable for me.

25 Györffy 1975, quoted from Noonan 1995–1997, 254.

26 Markov 1976.

27 Noonan 1995–1997, 293–294.

28 The economy of the Kipchaks in the Kimek State is defined as semi-sedentary (Kumekov 1972, 88). On the Pechenegs and their ties to the late period of the Dzhetyasar culture (with a mixed economy) along the lower reaches of the Syr Darya, see Vainberg 1990, 100–103, 283–285, and 292–293; Levina 1996.

29 On the Cumans and the Pechenegs in Europe, see Pletneva 1958, 1981c, 1973, and 1990; Stoianov 2006a, as well as the works of P. Golden in Golden 2003.

30 On this issue especially, see Gumilev 1997, 21–23 and 38–40, as well as Stoianov 2006a, 175–177. Although it is completely logical, Gumilev's theory on the symbiosis between the

The sedentarization of the nomads that inhabited the steppe zone north of the Black Sea depended heavily on their domination over the forest-steppe zone or the possibility for it to be used for summer pastures. Thus, during the period between the fifth and the seventh centuries, the Bulgars began to settle down in the forest-steppe zone, which led to a strong steppe influence on the Pastyrskoe-Penkovka culture. Between the fifth and the seventh centuries, however, this region lacked a strong political center, since Kievan Rus' was to become such a center only later, and the nobility of the steppe communities had therefore political supremacy. Conversely, during the eleventh and the twelfth centuries, the supremacy there was held by the ruling family of the Rus' state. Probably not only the strong steppe influence, but also the desire to subjugate the local population can both be seen as reasons for the use of the *khagan* title by some Rurikids, along with the tamga (trident), which has been a typical symbol of power in the steppes and in Middle Asia since ancient times.[31]

Time and peace are needed for the establishment of a steppe empire or for the spread of a sedentary lifestyle in a nomadic community. Invasions can also influence the sedentarization process. The newcomers take over the lands that are most suitable for stock-breeding. And the preceding population retreats to territories which cannot be used for nomadic pastoralism. It gradually turns to a partial or total sedentarization. This is what happened to the Scythians after the Sarmatian invasion.[32] The same probably befell the Bulgars after the utter defeat of Great Bulgaria by the Khazars. In this sense it is quite clear that the sedentarization processes among the steppe peoples depended to a bigger extent on the ties between them. In terms of the relations between nomads and sedentary people, the study of Khazaria could acquire another perspective. Compared to the Magyars, Pechenegs and the Oghuz, the Khazar Khaganate was actually a sedentary state.

The spread of the power of the steppe empires of the khaganate type was usually not connected with significant invasions or ethnic dislocations. The

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Cumans and the Rus' principalities (the Chernihiv one) is not accepted by most Russian and Ukrainian scientists who maintain the traditional understanding about the opposition between the forest-steppe sedentary tribes and the steppe nomadic ones (see for instance Tolochko 1999).

31 On the Rus' khagans, see Novosel'tsev 1982; Golden 2003, no. 6, 81–97; Konovalova 2001; Petrukhin 2001, 73–74 and 77; Stepanov 2000, 198–208 and 2005b. On the tamgas as a regal symbol and their distribution, see Vainberg 1990, 251–252 and 274–277; Vainberg and Novgorodova 1976; Kliashtornyi and Sultanov 2000.

32 Khazanov 1975, 248–249.

conquered peoples, albeit recognizing the khagan's authority, maintained their way of life and their social structures. The khaganates thus managed to ensure periods of relative peace. It is quite possible that the subjugation of the Khazars and the Bulgars to the Turkic and Avar Khaganates (neither the Turks nor the Avars settled permanently in the lands north of the Black Sea or north of the Caucasus) eventually made possible for the formation of Great Bulgaria and the Khazar Khaganate during the seventh century.

We often "observe" various tribes during periods of movement (migration). Quite naturally, at such times stock-breeding dominated their economy. The transition from agriculture to stock-breeding (and vice-versa) sometimes took decades. The nomads followed the main routes for grazing (winter and summer ones), thus passing through various geographical areas (mountains, plains and deserts). Where possible and when necessary, they created a more or less productive agricultural sector, often combining it with a developed settlement system (as was the case in Khazaria). In the steppes, cities initially emerged as administrative centers. Depending on their proximity to international trade routes, they grew into significant centers, attracting a large and multiethnic population of craftsmen and merchants. They supported themselves and received food supplies from their own agricultural periphery (especially judging by the data on Khazaria). In many cases the produced agricultural and handicraft goods not only met the domestic demand, but were also used for export.

The sedentarization process in the steppe communities was not unidirectional. As A. Khazanov points out, sedentarization and the transition towards nomadism can develop simultaneously in the same community.[33] Examining the development of nomadism in the Mediterranean world, F. Braudel notes a constant fluctuation between different forms of pastoralism, as well as that such changes can take centuries. These are the so-called "slow" movements that remain scarcely perceptible to science.[34]

A. Khazanov compares the Khazar economy to that of the Third Scythian Kingdom.[35] And according to S. Tolstov, the economy of the Oghuz along the lower reaches of the Syr Darya was similar to the Khazar one.[36] In this context, quite significant is the definition of S. Pletneva, according to whom the khaganates (the steppe empires) were at the designated by her third stage

33 Khazanov 1975, 13; see also Stepanov 2002b, 25–28.

34 Braudel 1998, 96.

35 In this case the nomadic society became increasingly urban-agricultural (Khazanov 1975, 13, 249, and 258–261).

36 Tolstov 1947a, 75 and 100.

of development, which involved the sedentarization of the majority of the population that engaged in trade, agriculture and handicrafts. In other words, the nomads were no longer nomads and had a semi-sedentary economy. In S. Pletneva's opinion, this stage is typical not only for Khazaria, but also for the Uyghur and the Kyrgyz Khaganates, or for the steppe empires that had succeeded the Turkic Khaganates. Although they engaged in agriculture in their winter or summer camps (which was typical for the second stage according to S. Pletneva's classification), the Turks did not transition towards a large-scale sedentarization. This could also have been a result of the close symbiosis they had with the sedentary Iranian-speaking population of Middle Asia.[37] In this connection it should be noted that during the eighth and ninth centuries, the boundaries between sedentary and nomadic peoples in Middle Asia and in the steppe zone of Eastern Europe became blurry.[38]

A. Khazanov does not deny the presence of agriculture in nomadic communities. A good crop required significant effort, due to the harsh conditions in the steppes. In many places, agriculture was developed only through the construction of irrigation canals. The large-scale sedentarization of the nomads occurred only after their migration to other environmental areas. A. Khazanov assumes that in the steppe zone agriculture was possible only in territorially limited or peripheral areas. He names the Hungarian Plain, Mawarannahr, the area between the Amu Darya and Syr Darya Rivers, the Zhetysu region and Ordos.[39]

I think that this is one of the controversial aspects of A. Khazanov's theory, since he refers to territories that were by no means peripheral but quite central to the steppe empires (although not to the steppe as a geographical area). There, the initial alliances that subsequently expanded their power over the steppe pastures were often created. Before establishing their khaganate, the Ashina Turks in the Altai Mountains were a sedentary people whose livelihood depended on both stock-breeding and irrigation farming, and especially on metal mining.[40] The Hungarian Plain was central for the Huns of Attila, was well as for the Avar Khaganate and the Magyar state. The Zhetysu region was the main territory of the Wusun alliance.[41] And Ordos was the initial territory

37 Pletneva 1982, 77–126. On the Turko-Sogdian symbiosis, see Golden 2006; Pritsak 1981a; Stepanov 2005a, 33–37.

38 See Stepanov 2005a, 43.

39 Khazanov 1994, 44–50 and 200–201.

40 Kyzlasov 1997, 27; Markov 1976, 42.

41 The Wusun economy was nomadic in the early stages of the existence of their alliance which had a center in the Zhetysu region from the third century BC onwards. In

of the Huns (Hunnu). The Minusin Valley was such a center for the state of the Khakas people—the Kyrgyz Khaganate.[42]

Probably suitable for agriculture was also the initial land of the Yuezhi alliance north of Nanshan. As an ethnic group that created a steppe empire they preceded the Huns. They were later associated with the ruling dynasties of Sogd and established the powerful Kushan Empire in Middle Asia.[43] The region of the Amu Darya and Syr Darya Rivers has had a very strong influence on the steppe world from ancient times. It was the place of emergence of the state alliances of Khwarezm (along the lower reaches of the Amu Darya) and Kangju (along the lower and middle reaches of the Syr Darya). The great importance of this region for the ideology and culture of Khazaria, as well as for the other peoples of the steppe world, is unquestionable. This is the territory of the ancient and mythical Turan. Not coincidentally, until the eleventh century rulers of nearly all the steppe empires derived their genealogies from the legendary ruler Afrasiab (the last dynasties that bound their origins to him were the Seljuqids and the Karakhanids).[44]

Prior to the establishment of the Khazar Khaganate (in the sixth to seventh centuries), the Khazars lived in Dagestan and had a mixed economy, similar to that of Khazaria during the tenth century. The practice of agriculture and handicrafts in Dagestan was not disrupted by various invasions. The details surrounding the nature of this region between the third and the seventh centuries, as well as the reasons why the Khazars surpassed the other numerous ethnic communities that inhabited these lands, remain as yet unclear. But one thing is clear—from its very beginning Khazaria was not a typical nomadic state. The agricultural areas in the steppe zone of the Khazar Khaganate grew and spread also during the period of its greatest territorial expansion. That was the time when the khaganate added the largest number of agricultural tributary communities, a fact that for instance contradicts the theory of A. Khazanov, who believed that the large-scale sedentarization of the nomads was the consequence of the reduction of tributary regions.[45]

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the ensuing period and especially in the second and third centuries AD, the economy of the Wusuns became mixed and combined both stock-breeding with agriculture. Stock-breeding continued to be a leading sector and was a version of transhumance (Akishev and Kushaev 1963).

42 Kyzlasov 1960; Pletneva 1982, 92–94.

43 See Vainberg 1990, 242–252; Kliashtornyi and Sultanov 2000, 51–60.

44 Vainberg 1990, 92, 206, and 303.

45 Khazanov 1975, 259.

All those things are of significance for the economy of Khazaria. But all the other features: the ideology, titulature, religious beliefs, forms of governance and subjugation of the conquered lands continued to be inextricably bound to the "nomadic" world. Moreover, they were such despite the Judaization of the Khazar nobility during the ninth century. In this sense, the steppe peoples were guided by traditional centers that were part of their culture and world-view, and did not experience a significant influence from states that belonged to a different culture and professed different values. This is why the steppe empires were not the periphery of some civilizational center in the south. It is not by accident that according to Ts. Stepanov, "The Bulgarian society (during the seventh to ninth centuries—*Author's note*)—and in this sense it is no different than any other similar society—is a unique system, i.e. a "universe" that spins, so to say, around its own center. This means that it is structured around something internal, not external, and inherent to the system itself".[46]

In fact, with regard to the Khazars (and in a certain sense also the Bulgars) we are able to observe the process of the state's establishment somewhere from the middle. The characteristics of Danube Bulgaria and the Khazar Khaganate's development are not determined by the various forms of the nomadic economy or by ethnic differences. They incorporate the two states into the steppe world and to the world bordering it and are typical for many Iranian-speaking or Turkic-speaking communities. This is why economic criteria in the typology of the steppe states, as well as the forms of subordination or the level of sedentarization do not reveal the true nature of the state with regard to Eurasian Steppe traditions. It could be argued that the steppe state's roots lie in ancient Turan and in the imperial structures that developed on its territory (such as Kangju). It would not be an exaggeration to say that the sense of community and the ties between the various parts of this area were already present during the studied period.

Many agricultural states and societies that were part of steppe empires or of their periphery (for example in Middle Asia and the Caucasus or on the Balkans, etc.) constitute a cultural community. To some extent, Iran was also a part of it, conquered as it was several times by tribes whose origins could be sought in the steppe world (the Parthians, for instance, but also the Aryans). Not coincidentally, the influence of Iran was extremely strong among communities of different origins that inhabited the steppe zone at different times. For the period and region that are the subject of our present study, such an influence

46 Stepanov 1999a, 125. This is why the models sought and used by the Bulgars in Danube Bulgaria (during its pagan period) can be found in Middle Asia and not so much in Byzantium. See also Stepanov 2000, 19–33 and 1998, 247.

was manifested by the culture of Sassanid Iran in states like Danube Bulgaria or Khazaria. This is why the idea of a constant struggle between the nomadic and the agricultural worlds does not reveal the true image of statehood in the steppe world. The steppe peoples' relations with China or Byzantium cannot be seen as an example of this struggle, since they belong to different civilizational models and are alien to each other.

N. Kradin distinguishes four ways for the establishment of the steppe empires: the Mongolian, Turkic, Hunnic and the Khazar way. With the Mongolian way, steppe empires are created by a talented military commander who manages to impose his rule over the majority of the nomadic tribes. One such example is the empire of the Huns, created by Modun. With the Turkic way, the state is created in a region, peripheral to the steppe empire. Examples of this are the Turks and the Zhuzhans, and the Uyghurs and the Turks. The Hunnic way is associated with the migration of nomads to the territory of an agricultural state and the subsequent subjugation of its sedentary population (the Avars, Bulgars and the Magyars). And with the Khazar way of empire establishment, the nomadic empires emerge from the division of already existing larger empires. This is the way the Eastern and Western Turkic Khaganates were initially established; subsequently, the Khazar Khaganate emerged on the basis of the Western one, along with the other, defined as quasi-imperial, nomadic structures.[47]

Firstly, the state alliance of the Huns emerged much earlier than the time of Modun.[48] It existed in a state of constant rivalry with the Yuezhi. During the reign of Modun's father, the Huns were subjected to the Yuezhi, and Modun himself was taken hostage by them.[49] The rise of the Hunnu Empire resembles more closely the Turkic version in N. Kradin's model. After becoming ruler of the Huns, Modun subjugated not only nomadic, but also sedentary communities or ones with a mixed economy. They all shared a common worldview and culture and professed the same ideology, being part of the Turan world. These conquests provided the Huns with an economic independence.[50] In fact, the Turkic version of empire establishment is typical for the emergence of most steppe empires. The Huns and Turks strived to subjugate the steppe tribes, as well as the population of the "peripheral" areas with a mixed economy, which

47 Kradin and Skrynnikova 2006, 123–124.

48 This is noted by Kradin 2001a, 31–32.

49 This is a fact that N. Kradin does not pay much attention to in this monograph on the Huns (Kradin 2001a, 47ff). In his opinion, the state of the Huns was the first "nomadic" empire in Central Asia (Kradin 2001a, 234).

50 Kyzlasov 1998, 48.

did not differ significantly, ethnically or culturally, from the steppe nomads themselves. They had no intention of subjugating China.

The stone inscriptions left by the Turks and the Uyghurs stress their desire to rule over "their own" in a space, delineated by a square. "Their own" were the peoples, spread in the four directions or four corners of the square. China was not seen as part of this world and remained "alien" to it.[51] This "own" space is marked in Khazaria by the Khazar ruler Joseph as the authority over the descendants of Togarmah. According to L. Gumilev, the ethnic integrity and stability of Khazaria was due to the fact that its people belonged to the "West Eurasian super-ethnos". Only the Jews were excluded from it.[52]

The khaganates' "own" subject communities engaged in various economic practices. The sedentary population from the neighboring regions around the steppe zone, as well as from the steppe agricultural oases, was similar in origins and culture to the "steppe nomads". In this sense, any boundaries that could be drawn in the steppes cannot be based on economy. Farmers and nomads can form a sustainable community even if they have different ethnic backgrounds and some of them are newcomers (or conquerors), when they belong to the same cultural-ideological whole. A good example of this is Khwarezm.[53]

Therefore, of essential significance for the establishment and existence of the steppe empires is not the opposition in the north-south direction (which is a major direction, but with regard to the so-called "outside" other, as Ts. Stepanov puts it), but in the east-west direction (along which subordinate agricultural societies can be referred to as the "the friendly other").[54] The establishment of the Bulgarian, Avar and Magyar state is the result of such an opposition (the Bulgars of Asparukh were ousted by the Khazars, as were the Avars by the Turks and the Magyars by the Pechenegs). The Khazar state was created west of the Caspian Sea, on a territory that was peripheral to the Western Turkic Khaganate, and the establishment itself probably did not lead to any military conflicts between the Khazars and the Turks. With regard to the account of the Khazar ruler Joseph, the war with Great Bulgaria from the mid-seventh century could be seen as fundamental for the Khazar Empire.

The traits shared by all state entities in the steppe world, as well as in its periphery, should be sought not in their economy, but in their ideology. For it was the ideology that united in a whole the various communities, scattered across the vast expanses of Eurasia, that differed in origins and economy. The

51 See Stepanov 2005a, 114–116.

52 Gumilev 1997, 82.

53 See Vainberg 1990, 164–169.

54 On this issue, see Stepanov 2005a, 33–44.

statehood concept evolved beyond the influence of the powerful but alien civilizations of the sedentary south. The ideology of the steppe world had its roots in ancient times (dating as far back as the Bronze Age), when the boundaries between agriculture and nomadism were not yet clearly defined. That was the time of the mythical Aryans and Turanians.[55] All significant steppe empires in the subsequent centuries (up to Genghis Khan) compared to them. Thus, the ideology and religious notions of the linguistically different Turks and Iranians were extremely similar during the Early Middle Ages. According to O. Pritsak, the idea of a specific order (world) that bound the whole Eurasian Steppe was extremely durable and kept the steppe empires vital for two millennia.[56] The common tradition was preserved in the worldview and rituals of the majority of the descendants of the former steppe empires. This is for example true for the population of Eastern and Western Turkestan that otherwise differed in its origins and economy.[57]

In the view of V. Stoianov, "equestrian peoples with their abilities in maintaining traditions were the bearers of elements (concepts, organizational forms, etc.), inherited from the contacts of their ancestors in the past, which also made them intermediaries between cultures distant in time and space".[58] But the typologies of the steppe empires that are based on their economic characteristics alone are unable to give due weight to the ideology, and hence to the continuity of the cultural traditions that cannot, of course, be typical solely for pastoralists.[59]

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55 See Kliashtornyi and Sultanov 2000, 15–27. Such continuity among the steppe communities is disputed by Kradin and Skrynnikova 2006, 44. According to N. Kradin, continuity among the "nomadic" empires cannot be proven, since they were sometimes separated from each other by significant periods of time. The existence of a state or a political succession is not the sole cause for the spread of ideas, regardless of the society's political structure. At the same time, Kradin 2001a, 140 notes that the Huns, Turks and the Mongols had a "similar mythological system to justify the authority of the ruler of the steppe empire". It is difficult to reconcile this statement with his assertion that the steppe peoples (the nomads) did not have a singular spiritual core (Kradin and Skrynnikova 2006, 44).

56 Pritsak 1981a, 12–13.

57 See for instance an interesting ethnological study that shows the people of Eastern and Western Turkestan as part of a single ethno-cultural entity on the basis of childhood ritualism (Chvyr 2001).

58 Stoianov 2006, 182.

59 Particularly on the continuity in the statehood and ideology of the various steppe empires, see the works of P. Golden (especially the articles published in Golden 2003; see also Golden 2006 and 2007b), N. Di Cosmo (Di Cosmo 1999 and 2004), S. Kliashtornyi (Kliashtornyi and Sultanov 2000), S. Pletneva (Pletneva 1982), O. Pritsak (Pritsak 1981a), Ts. Stepanov (Stepanov 2005a), V. Stoianov (Stoianov 2006a) among others.

Nomadism or the nomadic tradition in Khazaria should be understood not as the dominant type of economy, but as the economic practice of nomadic groups of a sometimes vague status and even numbers. The main ideas and beliefs of the steppe communities were brought to Khazaria and preserved there. They were typical for the larger part of the khaganate's population (mainly the bearers of the Saltovo culture—the Khazars, Bulgars and the Alans). The border areas along the periphery of the state (the tributary regions) changed, but this did not affect its stability as a whole. The Khazar Khaganate was destroyed when its central (inner) lands were subjected to attacks and destruction. They were the ones that had a mixed economy. The pasture-lands (both mountain and steppe ones) in a way played the role of their periphery. It could be argued that the steppe territory was a vast economic periphery of centers that controlled it and which had a mixed economy. The agricultural sectors of the steppe state (internal or external) provided all the goods necessary for its survival regardless of its relations with the classic sedentary states, situated in the south.

The reasons most often associated with the downfall of the Khazar Khaganate are derived from the general theory of the nomadic economy. This concerns the dependence of the nomadic economy on its subject farmers and the strong centrifugal tendencies, existing in such a society that could be managed only by military force. The resources for this force (the army) were supplied mainly from external sources. Also of particular importance for the prestige of the ruler and for the revenues of the treasury was international trade. This theory regards the existence and destruction of a state as largely dependant on external (often also civilizational) factors. Rejecting the possibility of internal development, it misses important guidelines for the study of statehood in the steppes beyond the influence of the southern civilizations whose brilliance is sometimes overwhelming. And the steppe statehood is an ancient tradition with ideological roots going far back into the Bronze Age that is related to communities whose economy was not always dominated by stockbreeding. A descendant of this same tradition is the Khazar Khaganate.

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